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14th plenary meeting

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Official Records

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann (Nicaragua)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sergey V. Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): On 11 September 2001, the world changed, and it rallied together in the fight against the threat of terror, a threat that was common for all and knew no boundaries. I am referring to threat of terrorism. The world displayed an unprecedented level of solidarity by rejecting old phobias and stereotypes. It seemed that the global counter-terrorism coalition became a new reality that from then on would define the development of a system of international relations free from double standards and beneficial to all.

The cohesion in the face of the deadly threats emerging from Al-Qaida and other elements of international terrorism made it possible to achieve tangible success during the initial stage. But later, problems began to appear. A painful blow to the unity of the anti-terrorism coalition was delivered by the war in Iraq, when — as it turned out later, under the false pretext of the fight against terror and nuclear arms proliferation — international law was violated. The deepest crisis was thus created in a completely artificial way and even today it is far from being resolved.

Ever more questions are being raised about what is going on in Afghanistan. First and foremost, what is the acceptable price to pay in terms of the loss of civilians' lives in the ongoing counter-terrorism operation? Who decides on criteria for determining proportionality in the use of force? And why are the international contingents that are present unwilling to engage in the fight against the proliferating drug threat that causes increasing suffering in the countries of Central Asia and Europe? These and other factors give us reason to believe that the counter-terrorism coalition is faced with a crisis.

Looking at the core of the problem, it seems that this coalition lacks the requisite collective arrangements: equality among all its members in deciding on strategy and, especially, operational tactics. But in order to control the entirely new situation that evolved after 9/11, which required genuine cooperative effort, including joint analysis and coordination of practical steps, mechanisms designed for a unipolar world began to be used; decisions were taken in a single centre of power, while the rest merely had to follow.

We ended up with a privatization of the international community's efforts in the fight against terrorism. The inertia of the unipolar world also revealed itself in other spheres of international life, including unilateral steps taken in anti-missile defence and the militarization of outer space as well as in attempts to bypass parity in arms control regimes, expansion of political-military blocs, and politicization

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of the issues of access to and transport of energy resources.

The illusion of the existence of a unipolar world confused many. For some people, it generated a desire to place all of their eggs in one basket. In exchange for absolute loyalty, there was an expectation of *carte blanche* to resolve all problems, using any means. The emerging syndrome of complete permissiveness that developed led to a rampage on the night of 8 August, when aggression was unleashed on South Ossetia. The bombing of the sleeping city of Tskhinvali and the killing of civilians and peacekeepers trampled under foot all existing settlement agreements, thus putting an end to the territorial integrity of Georgia.

Russia helped South Ossetia to repel that aggression, and carried out its duty to protect its citizens and fulfil its peacekeeping commitments. Russia's recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia was the only possible step to ensure not only their security, but also the very survival of their peoples, considering the previous record of chauvinism of the Georgian leaders — starting with the Georgian leader Zviad Gamsakhurdia who, in 1991, under the slogan of "Georgia for Georgians", ordered the deportation of Ossetians to Russia, abolished the autonomous status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and later unleashed a bloody war against them.

That war was brought to an end at the cost of innumerable human lives, and peacekeeping and negotiation mechanisms were established with the approval of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). However, the current Georgian leadership has pursued a persistent policy of undermining those mechanisms through relentless provocation, and finally nullified the peace process by launching a new murderous war on the night of 8 August.

This problem is now closed. The future of the peoples of Abkhazia and South Ossetia has been reliably secured by the treaties between Moscow and Tskhinvali and Sukhumi. With the implementation of the Medvedev-Sarkozy plan, to which we are strongly committed, the situation around the two republics will finally be stabilized. It is important that this plan should be strictly and unswervingly implemented by all parties. We are concerned, however, by the attempts to rewrite it after the fact.

I believe that everyone here has tired of playing the role of extras for the Georgian regime, whose words contain not a shred of truth and whose foreign policy is aimed exclusively at provoking confrontation throughout the world in the pursuit of their own objectives which invariably run counter to the objectives of the Georgian people and to the goal of ensuring security in the Caucasus.

Today, it is necessary to analyse the crisis in the Caucasus from the viewpoint of its impact on the region and the international community as a whole. The world has changed yet again. It has become absolutely clear that the solidarity demonstrated after 9/11 must be revived through approaches untainted by geopolitical expediency and built on the rejection of double standards when fighting against any violations or breaches of international law — whether on the part of terrorists, political extremists or any others.

The crisis in the Caucasus has proved again that it is impossible to resolve the problems we face when blinded by the mirage of a unipolar world. The price we will have to pay in terms of human lives and destinies is too high. We cannot tolerate any attempts to resolve conflict situations by violating international agreements or by the unlawful use of force. If we allow that to occur once, then we run the risk of unleashing it in the future.

One cannot invoke the duty to defend in the abstract, and then be outraged when that principle is used in practice — and in strict conformity with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter and other norms of international law. In South Ossetia, Russia defended the highest of our common values, the most essential human right: the right to live.

The existing security architecture in Europe did not pass the test of recent events. Attempts to adjust it to the rules of a unipolar world led to a situation where that architecture proved incapable of containing an aggressor or preventing the supply of offensive weapons to it, contrary to all existing relevant codes of conduct.

We propose that this issue should be addressed in a comprehensive manner. President Dmitry A. Medvedev, of Russia, speaking in Berlin on 5 June, proposed an initiative on developing a Euro-Atlantic security treaty, a type of "Helsinki II". This work could have been started at the Pan-European summit with the

participation of all States as well as all organizations working in the region.

The treaty which we are proposing is meant to create a reliable collective security system that would ensure equal security for all States and set out, in legally binding form, the bases of relations among all participants, with a view to strengthening peace, ensuring stability and promoting integrated and manageable development efforts across the vast Euro-Atlantic region. This would be a process in which all parties would reaffirm their commitment to fundamental principles of international law, such as the non-use of force; peaceful settlement of disputes; sovereignty; territorial integrity; non-interference in internal affairs; and the inadmissibility of strengthening one's own security by infringing upon or endangering the security of others. We also need to consider together new mechanisms to ensure compliance with those fundamental principles. Naturally, such a treaty should organically fit into the legal framework of the United Nations Charter and its principles of collective security.

The cold war distorted the nature of international relations and turned them into an arena for ideological confrontation. Only now, after the cold war has ended, can the United Nations, created on the basis of a polycentric vision of the world, fully realize its potential. Today as never before, it is important that all States reaffirm their commitment to the United Nations as a global forum, to which there is no alternative and which possesses a universal mandate and generally recognized legitimacy, and as a centre for open, candid and frank debate and coordination of world policies on a just and equitable basis free from double standards. This is an essential requirement to ensure that the world regains its equilibrium.

The multitude of challenges that humanity is facing require comprehensive strengthening of the United Nations. In order to keep up with the times, the United Nations requires further rational reform to be able to gradually adapt itself to existing political and economic realities. On the whole, we are satisfied by the progress of the reform, including the initial results of the activities of the recently established Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council.

With regard to expansion of the membership of the Security Council, we will, of course, welcome

proposals that do not divide United Nations Member States but rather facilitate the search for mutually acceptable compromises and lead to a broad-based agreement.

Of increasing importance in the reform process is the promotion of dialogue and partnership among civilizations. Russia supports the Alliance of Civilizations and other initiatives in that regard. We reiterate our proposal that a consultative council of religions be established under United Nations auspices, taking into account the increasing role of the religious aspect in international life. That would assist in strengthening moral principles and incorporating them into international affairs.

Among the priorities of United Nations activities, a number of urgent issues have recently appeared on the Organization's agenda, including climate change and food and energy security. Those problems are global and interrelated, and they can be addressed and resolved only through a global partnership at a qualitatively new level, with active involvement by Governments, the scientific and business communities and civil society.

In particular, the current financial crisis requires urgent attention and synergy of efforts. From this rostrum, the President of France has put forward important initiatives aimed at a cooperative search for ways to revitalize the international financial system that involve the world's leading economies. In that context, we support the further development of partnerships between the members of the Group of Eight and key States in all developing regions. The Economic and Social Council could also play a role here. Russia will continue to participate responsibly in the work of various bodies of the United Nations system and in other contexts to help find an equitable solution to all those problems.

The international development assistance mechanisms being established in Russia will help us to increase the extent and effectiveness of our participation in international efforts to fight hunger and disease, to promote broader access to education and to overcome energy shortages, which will be our additional contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It is only natural that, in so doing, we should pay particular attention to assisting nearby countries. All countries have partners with which they share traditional friendly relations

based on a common history and geography. It is wrong to artificially undermine such relationships for the benefit of geopolitical schemes and against the will of the people.

We will continue to work together with all our neighbours. First and foremost, along with the other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, we will continue to develop the integration processes within the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Economic Community in order to preserve and promote our common heritage of culture and civilization, which, in a globalizing world, is a major resource of the Commonwealth and of each of its member States. That is why we have a particular interest in cooperating with those countries, and it is also why they view Russia as an area of special interest. We will therefore base our relations on the principles of equality, mutual benefit, respect for and consideration of one another's interests and compliance with existing agreements, in particular those on the peaceful settlement of disputes. That is also the way in which we intend to develop our relations in other regions of the world: openly, on the basis of international law and without any zero-sum games. Those principles were set out in the foreign policy concept approved by President Medvedev in July this year.

Russia is consistently implementing its network diplomacy and promoting cooperation in various formats: the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the BRIC countries — Brazil, Russia, India and China — partnership mechanisms with the European Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the League of Arab States and regional organizations in Latin America.

The developments that occurred in August gave us yet another occasion to think about the responsibility to report events accurately. Distortions of reality hamper international efforts to settle conflicts and crises and revive the worst practices of the cold-war era. If we wish to prevent the truth from becoming the first casualty of war, we must draw the appropriate conclusions, in particular in the light of a provision of the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, which states that States have the duty to refrain from propaganda for wars of aggression.

That is in line with the Guidelines on protecting freedom of expression and information in times of crisis, recently adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. I propose that the United Nations also issue a statement on that issue, this time in a universal context.

The obvious global effects of the crisis in the Caucasus show that the world has changed for everyone. There are now fewer illusions and fewer pretexts for refusing to respond to the most urgent challenges of modern times. That is precisely why we hope that the international community will, on the basis of common sense, finally manage to develop a programme of collective action for the twenty-first century.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdelwaheb Abdallah, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tunisia.

Mr. Abdallah (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish at the outset to sincerely congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. We are convinced that your diplomatic ability and skill will help us to ensure the success of this session and to attain the objectives to which we all aspire. I should also like to thank Mr. Srgjan Kerim for his excellent work and his valuable contributions to the smooth conduct of the previous session. Our sincere thanks go also to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his generous efforts to promote the work of the Organization and to enhance its performance in addressing various issues of importance to our countries and peoples.

The choice of the main theme of this year's general debate — the impact of the global food crisis on poverty and hunger in the world — reflects the importance of that issue and the growing awareness among all countries of its seriousness and of the need to work together to find effective solutions to reduce its impact and repercussions on national economies, particularly those of developing and poor countries, and on the increasing rates of poverty and hunger throughout the world.

In that context, the central role played by the United Nations is of crucial importance in addressing those issues and in striving to achieve a better balance in international relations and greater solidarity, justice and equality. That requires that we enhance the

Organization's reform process and strengthen its capacity to keep abreast of international developments.

In recent years, the world situation has been characterized by increasingly swift change, which has disrupted international balances and undermined prevailing development formulas. It has also created many problems and difficulties that have clearly affected the economies and development processes of many countries. In addition, it has weakened their capacity to make progress and increased their vulnerability. Furthermore, the world has recently witnessed serious economic problems, in particular an excessive rise in oil and basic food prices, which has threatened world food security and reduced the purchasing power of individuals, thus hampering the achievement of the goals and approaches set at the Millennium Summit. If we are to address this grave situation, we must step up international efforts by adopting development strategies based on the noble human aspects of world solidarity. In that context, Tunisia has called on international financial institutions and other organizations that specialize in economy and trade to establish and implement agricultural and production policies that guarantee the availability of food, which is a fundamental right enshrined in international human rights instruments.

I should like to take this opportunity to reiterate our call for intensified efforts to operationalize the World Solidarity Fund, endorsed by the General Assembly in 2002 (resolution 57/265) on the initiative of Tunisia as a mechanism to address the issues of poverty and privation in the world and to reduce disparities among peoples.

In order to keep abreast of the profound changes on the international scene and the new realities they have produced in international relations, along with the various challenges and complexities those changes represent, we must act to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to act more efficiently. We must also endeavour to reform the Organization, develop its structures and enhance the role it is expected to play to ameliorate the current international situation and turn globalization into a process that helps to guarantee peace and development for all peoples.

In that context, Tunisia supports all efforts and initiatives aimed at establishing new frameworks and mechanisms for action that can help to find collective solutions to common challenges in the vital fields of

security, peace, development, the environment and food security, as part of an appropriate approach to international relations founded on the complementarity between peace, security and development. However, that should be accompanied by strengthened multilateral action on the basis of cooperation, solidarity and a constructive dialogue among all countries.

Despite efforts to contain it, the heightened problem of terrorism in the world strengthens our belief in the need to unify the international approach to fighting that scourge and finding adequate solutions to it. Since the early 1990s, Tunisia has warned the international community against the dangers of terrorism and has called for the adoption of a comprehensive and efficient approach that takes into consideration the root causes of the scourge. Today, we renew the call of His Excellency President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to convene an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations to develop an international code of conduct for the fight against terrorism to which all parties shall commit themselves.

Climate change and the resulting intensification of the problems of desertification, drought and the lack of drinking water pose a threat to all humankind today and are a source of great concern to all. While affirming the close link between the environment and development and the crucial importance of promoting cooperation and solidarity to respond to the challenges in that regard, we should like to emphasize the need to include concerns about the potential effects of climate change, particularly in the African and Mediterranean regions, among the international community's priorities, as called for in the Tunis Declaration adopted by the International Solidarity Conference on Climate Change Strategies for the African and Mediterranean Regions, which was held in Tunisia in November 2007.

We would also like to reiterate the need to mobilize the necessary financial resources to promote research into climate monitoring and meteorology and the development of natural disaster early warning systems, in addition to the need to invest in reducing the greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warming.

We are convinced that the success of development efforts and the strengthening of

cooperation among our countries depend on providing a secure and stable international environment. Obstacles to success in that effort include the intensification of tensions and conflicts and the persistence of unresolved problems. In that regard, we reaffirm Tunisia's commitment to the values of peace and to the principles of international legality as the path to achieving just and lasting solutions to pending international issues. We also renew our determination to promote the values of moderation, tolerance and mutual respect in relations among countries and peoples and to establish bridges of communication and dialogue among all civilizations, cultures and religions.

In that context, while reaffirming Tunisia's position in support of our Palestinian brothers and their just cause as a people, we renew our call to the international community, especially its most influential members and the Quartet, to increase their efforts to bring Israel to end its aggressive practices and settlement activities. We call on them to intensify their work to reinvigorate the peace effort and to facilitate the resumption of negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis on the basis of the relevant international terms of reference, the Arab Peace Initiative and the results of the Annapolis Conference, with the aim of achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question.

Such a solution would guarantee that the Palestinians regain their legitimate national rights and establish an independent Palestinian State on their national territory. It would also guarantee the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Arab territories, including Syrian and Lebanese land. That solution would also provide security and stability for all the peoples of the region.

We also call for joint regional and international efforts to address the deterioration of security and humanitarian conditions in Iraq and to help the brotherly Iraqi people to restore security and stability so that they may devote their energies to reconstruction efforts while preserving their national and territorial unity.

We wish to take this opportunity to express our satisfaction with the recent positive developments in our sisterly country of Lebanon, namely, the election of the country's President and the establishment of a Government of national unity. We trust that our

Lebanese brothers will further strengthen that process in order to preserve Lebanon's security and stability.

Since the change of 7 November 1987, and under the wise leadership of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic of Tunisia, we have succeeded in accomplishing remarkable achievements in every area, due to substantial reforms that have strengthened the democratic process, promoted mechanisms to protect human rights and culture and consecrated public freedoms. Those reforms have enabled us to expand the scope of consultation and participation by the various sectors of civil society in identifying major trends and determining crucial national options within the framework of the rule of law and respect for institutions.

Those reforms have also made it possible to achieve many of the Millennium Development Goals, which has led to the improvement of living standards and the well-being of all segments of Tunisian society. Those achievements reflect the sound development choices and approaches implemented in Tunisia, which have allowed us to reach a high position on the list of countries with the highest human development indicators. That has earned Tunisia the respect of international financial institutions and the specialized agencies of the United Nations.

In its various development plans, Tunisia has continued to work for development and modernization in order to strengthen its capacity to keep up with international changes and actively contribute to building a world of peace and security and to make international relations more balanced and based on solidarity.

Based on its desire to achieve a higher level of integration at the regional and international levels, Tunisia is working to expand its participation in regional and international organizations and to develop political relations with friendly countries. It also endeavours to expand and diversify its scope of cooperation with them so as to establish an effective partnership based on mutual respect and common interests. In that regard, Tunisia firmly believes that the Arab Maghreb Union is a strategic and crucial choice for all peoples of the region. In cooperation and coordination with the other friendly Maghreb countries, we are sparing no effort to speed up the establishment of the Union.

Tunisia is also eager to promote joint Arab action and to enhance its ability to interact with regional and international bodies in order to address the changes taking place in the region and to contribute to the promotion of the reform and modernization process in the Arab world, in conformity with the decisions of the 2004 Arab summit held in Tunis.

With regard to Africa, Tunisia is contributing to the achievement of peace and security in the continent by participating in United Nations peacekeeping operations and by developing economic relations with friendly African countries. Based on our belief in the importance of joint African action and the fact that the African Union is the ideal framework to address the continent's problems and achieve the integration to which our peoples aspire, Tunisia reaffirms its strong determination to pursue the process decided within the framework of the African Union to establish and operationalize its institutions, enhance its role in the resolution of conflicts and promote the development process in Africa.

With regard to Europe, Tunisia attaches strategic importance to its relations with the European Union (EU) and is continuing to work to develop those relations on the basis of a solidarity-based partnership with EU countries on the basis of dialogue, cooperation and mutual respect. The building of a Euro-Mediterranean cooperation framework is one of Tunisia's priorities and a tenet of its foreign policy. Tunisia has therefore supported every initiative and mechanism that contributes to the promotion of peace, solidarity and development in the Mediterranean region — including the Barcelona process, the 5+5 Dialogue, and the Mediterranean Forum.

Tunisia was among the first countries to welcome the French initiative on the establishment of the Union for the Mediterranean. We are convinced that the future of that initiative depends upon an effective partnership that guarantees the active participation of the countries of the southern Mediterranean in establishing the foundations of the Union and in the taking of decisions of concern to the region.

Meeting the challenges posed by the new international situation and the profound changes taking place on the world scene requires us all to step up efforts to further entrench the noble universal principles and humanist values on which the United Nations was founded. It also requires perseverance in

enhancing the process of United Nations reform to make its work more efficient and to ensure its active contribution to providing optimum international conditions that can help us find collective solutions to common challenges and current international issues, respond to our peoples' aspirations for stability, and provide the appropriate conditions for prosperity and well-being in an environment of cooperation and solidarity-based development.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Kinga Göncz, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Hungary.

Ms. Göncz (Hungary): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election. In fulfilling your challenging tasks during this session, you may rest assured of the support and cooperation of the delegation of the Republic of Hungary. I also wish to salute your predecessor, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, representative of the Eastern European Group, who served us with distinction and dedication.

The challenges we have to face daily in an increasingly globalized world require answers based on the principle of universally accepted values and the practice of flexible adaptation to swift changes in our environment. That need is reflected in the new external relations strategy adopted by the Hungarian Government at the beginning of this year. Our strategy, policies and actions demonstrate our commitment to upholding the rule of international law, to giving priority to effective multilateralism, to spreading the culture of cooperation and the peaceful settlement of international disputes, and to working towards preserving a liveable and sustainable environment for future generations. Hungary's geographic position and its expertise in democracy building, good governance, promoting the rule of law and human rights, disarmament and non-proliferation will serve as a good basis for our effective contribution to the work of the Organization.

Skyrocketing energy prices, food and financial crises and commodity speculation are endangering the results we have attained so far towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A coherent and coordinated response is needed to reverse that process. As an emerging donor country, Hungary firmly believes that the international community cannot use the difficulties we all face as an excuse not to do the utmost to achieve the MDGs.

We are firmly dedicated to broadening the outreach of our foreign policy to the developing countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. International development cooperation and assistance are a growing segment of our foreign policy. We are strongly committed to intensifying our efforts in the years to come. We are therefore gradually increasing our official development assistance, concentrating primarily on those activities where Hungary has comparative advantages, especially in the areas of agriculture to combat famine and poverty through the introduction of modern growing facilities, animal husbandry technologies, forestry and fisheries programmes, water management, developing health services and promoting good governance.

Every day we are ruining our environment through the intensive pace of development and the emission of greenhouse gases. To address that challenge, we need a more effective institutional framework that includes clear political guidance; adequate, stable and predictable funding; a strong scientific base; and improved assessment of activities and emergency response institutions. Hungary fully agrees that the matter is urgent and hopes that the ongoing deliberations on the future of the United Nations Framework Climate Change Convention and the Kyoto Protocol will lead to concrete results in the coming year.

This year we mark the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as 15 years of the existence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Over the past 60 years, humankind has made extraordinary progress in the promotion and protection of human rights. Our job is to work hard for the full implementation of human rights treaties. Our expectations were fulfilled on 3 May of this year when the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities entered into force. Hungary became the second Member State to ratify the Convention and its Optional Protocol. We hope that it will be universally accepted in the near future.

We strongly supported the establishment of the Human Rights Council and we are determined to continue to do so. In our view, the time has come for the Council, as well as for all of us, to redouble our dedicated efforts to make the work of the Human Rights Council more efficient.

Following the adoption of a consensus resolution by the Council last September, the Forum on Minority Issues will hold its first session at the end of 2008. I am personally very proud that the first Forum session will be chaired by a fellow Hungarian, Ms. Viktória Mohácsi, a member of the European Parliament. I hope that, under her guidance, the Forum on Minority Issues will be widely recognized, efficient and results-oriented.

We firmly believe that a lasting solution to current challenges cannot be achieved without the effective involvement of women in all aspects of international cooperation. I would like to state that Hungary fully supports the initiative to undertake a comprehensive review of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) by 2010, and I am confident that the United Nations should play a leadership role.

The United Nations and the European Union — together with Governments, non-governmental organizations and other international organizations around the world — have made tremendous efforts to promote international cooperation in the area of the prevention of genocide and mass atrocities. However, the steps taken thus far still fall short of preventing the many dreadful crimes against humanity. As a Member of the United Nations and the European Union, Hungary is fully committed to the idea of preventing genocide and is ready to take specific steps to that end. We have decided to prepare a feasibility study on the establishment in Budapest of an international centre for the prevention of genocide and mass atrocities. In our view, it should be an independent institution with the aim of contributing to international efforts to prevent the occurrence of genocide.

The most important outstanding issue in the area of counter-terrorism, is the full and speedy implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (see resolution 60/288), for which Member States have the main responsibility. Concluding a comprehensive convention on international terrorism also remains a high priority for the Republic of Hungary, and we fully support the work of the Ad Hoc Committee in that regard. We hope that we will be able to finalize the drafting of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism during the sixty-third session.

In spite of the many security and political challenges that still persist in Afghanistan, we acknowledge and appreciate the achievements of the international community and the enormous work that has been done so far to bring about tangible improvements in the everyday lives of the Afghan people. In that process, the United Nations Mission in Afghanistan remains instrumental, especially in the preparation and conduct of the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections in 2009 and 2010. Hungary remains committed to helping Afghanistan to rebuild following many years of war and to create a State that is safe, stable and democratic. We are committed to continuing our military assistance as a leading nation in the Provincial Reconstruction Team in the northern part of the country, as well as to expand our development activities in Afghanistan.

Contributing to peace and stability and achieving prosperity have constituted a cornerstone of Hungarian foreign policy in the Western Balkans for many years. We continue to believe that that goal is best served by actively supporting the integration of the region into Euro-Atlantic structures. As we all know, on 17 February, Kosovo declared its independence. A number of United Nations Member States recognized that independence, including Hungary. We deem it of crucial importance that a resolution of the Kosovo Assembly and its new constitution fully committed Kosovo to democracy, the rule of law, the protection of Serb communities and other minorities, the protection of cultural and religious heritage and the international presence. Without a stable Kosovo there can be no stability in the Balkans. In that context, we welcome and support the continued presence of the international community on the basis of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). We also remain committed to contributing to the stability of Kosovo through the European Union Rule of Law Mission, the International Security Force in Kosovo and an international civilian office as part of the international presence.

Hungary fully supports the efforts of the international community and various institutions to implement the peace agreement in Georgia. Hungary strongly believes in the peaceful settlement of conflicts. The use of military force to settle territorial disputes represents a dangerous precedent that can have further implications in the whole region and beyond. Any further steps and negotiations must be based on full respect for Georgia's sovereignty,

territorial integrity, internationally recognized borders and democratically elected leadership. It is of crucial importance that all parties agree on a unified interpretation of the agreement. We fully support, and we are ready to participate in, the planned missions of the different international institutions, such as those of the EU and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, in resolving the conflict and monitoring the implementation of the peace agreement. Hungary has offered humanitarian assistance, and we are studying further possibilities to assist Georgia.

Hungary attaches great importance to the comprehensive process initiated at the Annapolis Conference, convened by the President of the United States of America, in order to settle the Middle East conflict. Since Annapolis, there have been regular meetings between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority. We hope that the peace process will lead to the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the normalization of Israeli-Arab relations.

The Iranian nuclear programme continues to be a matter of serious concern for my Government. Iran has failed to provide the international community with credible assurances as to whether its nuclear projects are in line with its international obligations. We deeply regret that the leadership of Iran has refused to abide with the relevant Security Council resolutions. Only full and unconditional compliance with the demand to suspend its enrichment-related and reprocessing activities can pave the way for the re-establishment of confidence in the peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme and open up prospects for intensified economic and political cooperation. We hope that Iran will change its present course of confrontation and opt for constructive dialogue with its partners.

After five years of conflict, Iraq is showing clear signs of recovery for the first time. With the help of the international community, Iraq is achieving major milestones in the reconciliation and reconstruction process. Hungary welcomes the fact that the improved security situation allows for the establishment of a withdrawal schedule, assuming that a fundamental change in the capability of the Iraqi Government to take control provides grounds for a long-term settlement of the crisis.

Due to the conflict raging in Darfur, which is one of the most worrisome on the African continent, the situation in the Sudan and neighbouring countries is

still unpredictable and explosive. Hungary welcomes the extension of the mandate of African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur until 31 July 2009. It is essential that the mission be fully deployed by the end of the year. The establishment of criminal courts in the region paves the way towards a solution of the crisis in Darfur. Nevertheless, we should continue to follow the fragile peace process closely.

We are convinced that, in order to address the various challenges of the twenty-first century, the international community needs a strong, reformed and well-functioning United Nations. Progress has been made in all areas of United Nations reform in the past two years, with some new bodies becoming operational. In other areas we need further consultations and negotiations with Member States in order to achieve a lasting solution. Hungary is ready to contribute to those negotiations. We welcome the recent decision of the General Assembly to start the intergovernmental negotiations on the reform of the Security Council during the sixty-third session.

In conclusion, Hungary is strongly committed to work with you, Mr. President, during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly in attaining the objectives of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Kabinga Jacus Pande, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zambia.

Mr. Pande (Zambia): At the outset, my delegation wishes to convey, on behalf of the people and the Government of the Republic of Zambia, our deepest and sincere appreciation and gratitude to Member States, as well as the United Nations, for the numerous messages of condolences we received following the loss of our beloved President, His Excellency Mr. Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, State Council, who passed away in Paris, France on 19 August 2008. Their messages of sympathy comforted and strengthened us immensely.

We are particularly indebted to the Government of Egypt for the medical attention rendered to our late President when he suffered a stroke while attending the African Union summit in Sharm el-Sheik on 29 June 2008 and for his subsequent evacuation to France. We are similarly grateful to the Government of France for the medical attention and hospitality availed to the late President up to the time of his death as well as for the repatriation of his body to Zambia for burial. The

President was put to rest on 3 September 2008, which, incidentally, would have been his sixtieth birthday.

I wish to inform this Assembly that, in accordance with the Zambian Constitution, elections for the new President should be held within 90 days of the death or incapacitation of a sitting President. Thus, the Government has designated 30 October 2008 for the presidential by-election. In the spirit of transparency, accountability and good governance, the Zambian Government has invited international organizations, including the United Nations, to send election observers to the elections.

At this juncture, let me join others who have spoken before me in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. Zambia has no doubt that you will steer this session to a successful conclusion. I wish to assure you of Zambia's support.

May I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Srgjan Kerim of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, for ably presiding over the proceedings of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session.

I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts in his dedicated service to humankind in trying to maintain international peace and security, achieve development and eradicate poverty for all.

The theme for this session, "The impact of the global food crisis on poverty and hunger in the world as well as the need to democratize the United Nations", is indeed testimony to the noble efforts of the Secretary-General. The theme is also most appropriate, especially since it is relevant to the development challenges currently facing Africa and the developing world as a whole.

It is confirmed in the Secretary-General's reports that many developing countries, and in particular sub-Saharan Africa, will not meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 and that Member States should therefore redouble and reconfirm their commitments if we are to meet that target.

Zambia believes that the attainment of the MDGs will be meaningful only if it is all-inclusive. That will require the implementation of programmes and policies for empowering women, the girl child and other vulnerable groups of society be part of the overall process within that framework.

In that regard, Zambia supports the assertion that women's empowerment and gender equality are drivers for reducing poverty, building food security and reducing maternal mortality. It is in that realization that most of the States members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) signed the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development in August 2008 — the first of its kind in Africa.

Such regional and national efforts need to be complemented by global action. It is in that regard that Zambia welcomes the ongoing debate on reforms in the context of United Nations system-wide coherence, particularly as they relate to strengthening the gender architecture, which is currently fragmented and underresourced.

In the process of empowering women and striving for gender equality, Zambia realizes that HIV/AIDS continues to be a challenge to the country's development, with the prevalence rate for women being higher than that of men. The pandemic is robbing the country of a young and productive workforce. The Zambian Government therefore has put in place a number of policies that have helped to reduce the prevalence of HIV from 16 per cent in 2001 to 14 per cent in 2007. That reduction in the prevalence rate is an indication that our Government is determined to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS. That would not, however, be possible without the support of the international community.

The Monterrey Consensus places obligations on developed and developing countries alike to come up with concrete strategies and action to address poverty. Most African countries, including Zambia, have resolved to develop their economies and embarked on prudent macroeconomic management, channelling resources to growth sectors that present the greatest prospect for wealth and employment creation. They have further developed policies, plans and programmes that are not only growth-oriented but also pro-poor and address social development.

I wish to acknowledge with appreciation the role that our cooperating partners and the international community have played and continue to play in all our development and poverty-eradication programmes. We welcome the commitments made by Africa and its cooperating partners in the context of various important initiatives and partnerships in recent years, inter alia, the Tokyo International Conference on

African Development, which among other things, came up with a Follow-up Mechanism with regard to implementation of commitments made during the conference.

Similarly, the China-Africa Partnership and the European Union-Africa Strategic Partnership have also contributed substantially to Africa's development needs. With regard to the India-Africa Forum, we also look forward to the speedy implementation of commitments undertaken during the Summit Forum in India in April 2008.

Furthermore, we appreciate the assistance rendered by the G-8 Africa Partnership, the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief of the President of the United States of America, the comprehensive health-care initiative sponsored by the Government of Cuba, the Initiative for Africa's Development of the Republic of Korea and Pakistan's Special Technical Assistance Programme for Africa. In similar vein, we look forward to the implementation of the recently launched Africa-Turkey partnership forum.

Zambia notes with concern, however, that the efforts the cooperating partners are making with regard to improved access to the markets of the developed countries and official development assistance flows and finance for development for African countries have not been completely fulfilled. We commend the five cooperating partners that have met or exceeded the target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national income as their contribution to official development assistance. We urge the cooperating partners that have not fulfilled their commitments to do so. We also look forward to the upcoming Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus in Doha and hope donors will honour their commitments.

We are aware that improved market access for developing countries is one commitment that, once fulfilled, will offer the greatest prospects for our integration into the world trading system. It also has the potential to foster food security for all and to raise the standard of living of the majority of the population that depends on agriculture for its livelihood.

In that regard, Zambia notes with disappointment that the Doha Round of trade negotiations collapsed at a time when many of us were looking forward to a successful conclusion to those protracted talks. It is my country's hope that the negotiations will reconvene and

conclude as soon as possible so that the developing countries can compete favourably and become integrated into the multilateral trading system.

The current global oil and food crises not only pose a threat to the gains made in achieving macroeconomic stability and growth in developing countries, but are an even greater threat to the achievements made towards eliminating extreme poverty and reducing by half the proportion of people suffering from hunger.

A solution to the food crisis must be found as a matter of urgency. In that connection, Zambia wishes to thank the Secretary-General for establishing the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, whose task is to find a coherent and coordinated approach to resolving the food crisis. In addressing the crisis, we must be mindful of the fact that a large percentage of the people in developing countries depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Therefore, in finding a solution to high food prices, we should ensure that we do not inadvertently encourage rural-urban migration by including measures that are disadvantageous to those engaged in food and general agricultural production.

In addition, the issue of climate change, which has worsened the food crisis, requires the concerted efforts of the international community to address it through the development of adaptation and mitigation measures. Zambia, like most of sub-Saharan Africa, has not been spared the adverse effects of climate change, such as increased exposure to drought, rising temperatures, more erratic rainfall and extreme weather conditions. Those are threatening water and agricultural systems, thereby condemning millions more to face malnutrition and water shortages.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Let me now turn to the ongoing reforms of the United Nations, in particular the protracted discussions on reform of the Security Council. Zambia wishes to reiterate the fact that United Nations reform will not be complete without meaningful reform of the Security Council. Any new proposals to reform the Council should take into account Africa's call for two permanent seats with the veto power and two additional non-permanent seats, as that will not only address the historical injustice against Africa, but also respond to the need to democratize the Security

Council, given that Africa constitutes the second-largest bloc of the United Nations membership. Equally important in that regard will be the need to reform the working methods of that important United Nations body.

It is a matter of concern to Zambia that the question of Western Sahara has remained unresolved for such a long time. In accordance with the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960, the people of Western Sahara should be free to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. In that regard, Zambia calls for the implementation of all relevant United Nations resolutions on that matter, while supporting the ongoing efforts between the parties concerned to find a lasting solution.

With regard to the situation in Zimbabwe, Zambia welcomes the signing of the Inter-Party Agreement on 15 September 2008 and pays tribute to former South African President Thabo Mbeki, who, on behalf of SADC, successfully discharged the mandate entrusted to him. We remain optimistic that the concerned parties will adhere to the Agreement, which has created a good basis for addressing the socio-economic problems confronting the country. In that regard, we appeal to the international community to provide all possible support to the people of Zimbabwe in their efforts to resuscitate their economy.

There is no doubt that the United Nations remains the only multilateral institution capable of addressing the challenges of our one world. The world's poor are looking to the United Nations system to deliver on its commitments to enable them to live in dignity with every possible opportunity, free from hunger and diseases such as HIV/AIDS and, above all, in a peaceful, secure and environmentally sustainable world. Let us therefore not fail them, for they deserve no less.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mohlabi Tsekoa, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Relations of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Mr. Tsekoa (Lesotho): My delegation associates itself with the compliments extended to Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at the present session, to his predecessor and to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

We greatly welcome the convening and the outcomes of the two high-level meetings — one on Africa's development needs and the other on the Millennium Development Goals — that have been held during the course of this session of the General Assembly. Let us not lose the momentum generated by those two meetings.

Let me also thank the President of the General Assembly for advancing a very appropriate theme, "The impact of the global food crisis on poverty and hunger in the world as well as the need to democratize the United Nations". The decision of the Secretary-General to establish the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis demonstrates the determination of the United Nations to champion a unified response to the current food crisis. That is indeed emboldening, and we welcome the progress that has been achieved so far by the Task Force in producing the Comprehensive Framework for Action.

The food crisis poses a serious threat to the fragile progress that is being made towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It can also be a source of political instability in developing and often vulnerable countries. Policy initiatives that should be implemented by relevant stakeholders to overcome the crisis were adequately articulated in the outcome documents of the High-Level Conference on World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy, held in Rome in June 2008. There, the bottom line was clearly drawn that, while current energy needs are real and urgent, they cannot and should not be allowed to compete with the call to ensure food security. The stakes are too high in many developing countries, Lesotho included, where abject poverty, malnutrition and the spread of HIV and AIDS have reached unacceptable levels. All humankind has a right to food, and hunger constitutes a violation of human dignity.

That is why my delegation regrets the lack of progress in the implementation of previous international commitments to fight hunger, particularly those contained in the outcomes of the 1996 and the 2002 World Food Summits. The Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of reducing by half the number of undernourished people by 2015 will not be achieved unless there is visible movement from rhetoric to action.

Lesotho was encouraged by the G8 Statement on Global Food Security that was recently issued at the Hokkaido Toyako summit. The Statement highlighted the importance of stimulating world food production and of increasing investments in agriculture. Hope-raising pledges were made at that summit and earlier ones. What remains to be done as a matter of great urgency is to deliver on those promises. Also, we call upon other development partners, including the Bretton Woods institutions, to scale up their efforts to help farmers in the least developed countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, to raise agricultural production and productivity.

The preparedness of the African continent to shoulder its responsibilities in this regard was clearly reflected in a declaration entitled "Responding to the Challenges of High Food Prices and Agriculture Development" that was recently adopted at the African Union summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in July this year.

The establishment by the World Bank of two international Climate Investment Funds in May 2008, intended to provide innovative financing for developing countries to pursue cleaner development paths and also to help protect themselves from the impact of climate change, was another encouraging development. Our hope is that the Climate Investment Funds will be additional to existing official development assistance, which is so sorely needed by the developing countries to achieve the MDGs.

Peace and development are closely interrelated and mutually reinforcing. The United Nations cannot afford the luxury of complacency in its mandate for the maintenance of world peace and stability. Most importantly, let us not forget that the United Nations was born from the ashes of devastating world wars. Indeed, the primary purpose of the United Nations was and continues to be to prevent future wars and to create sustainable international security, but every year we witness the emergence of new hotspots and designer wars as some big and powerful States resort more and more to the use of force. Every time those States try to pursue the illusory goal of imposing their will by force on others, they create a more unstable and dangerous world.

Let me now address an issue of concern to my delegation — the abuse of the principle of universal jurisdiction. The Sharm el-Sheikh assembly of the

African Union was seized with the issue of the abuse of the principle of universal jurisdiction by some countries that seem inclined to use the principle to target certain African leaders.

Of course, lest I be misunderstood, we do recognize that universal jurisdiction is a principle of international law whose purpose is to ensure that individuals who commit such grave offences as genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity are brought to justice. That noble principle should be impartially and objectively applied so that it will not be abused for the political ends of some individuals or countries, as that could endanger international order and security.

It is a trite fact that the need for the application of the principle by individual States has been rendered unnecessary by the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC). If a State is unable or unwilling to deal with certain grave situations, such a matter should be referred to the Court, which will deal with it impartially. As we know, even the Security Council refers certain situations to the ICC. We need only emphasize that the ICC was created by this world body and must enjoy the support and trust of the entire membership of the United Nations. It must also be immune from any external influences.

As we respond to the invitation to comment on the second part of our theme, "The need to democratize the United Nations", we do so against the background of the integrity and credibility of the Security Council. We raise the issue of the integrity and credibility of the Council, recognizing fully its responsibility to uphold the three pillars of the United Nations: human rights, development and peace, and security.

The working methods of the Security Council continue to interest us precisely because the Council is the most powerful institution within the United Nations setting. It is charged with the responsibility for the maintenance of world peace and order and it is a custodian of human rights. In order to fulfil that mandate, the Security Council needs to always preserve its integrity and credibility. It is only when all Member States are convinced of its integrity and credibility that they will have confidence in it.

The Security Council can enjoy such confidence, however, if and only if it is seen to be transparent and democratic in its structures and accountable and responsible to the entire membership of the United

Nations; if and only if it submits itself to the rule of law; if and only if it is objective and impartial in its work; if and only if the membership of the United Nations is convinced that it is not used as a policy instrument of any one State or group of States; and finally, if and only if it subjects all States Members of the United Nations to the same and equal treatment.

The Security Council should thus not turn a blind eye to a situation in one country and then act when a similar situation obtains in another. It must be an honest arbiter in conflicts. We all owe it to ourselves to work towards such reform of the Security Council that will help to preserve its integrity and credibility so that it can perform its lofty mandate more efficiently. Needless to say, the question of numbers, particularly numbers representing the African continent, is at issue, but I need not dwell on it as it has been amply covered by previous speakers.

Lesotho is also concerned that the Security Council continues to be seen to be encroaching on matters that fall within the powers and prerogatives of other organs of the United Nations, including the General Assembly. We believe that the Council must desist from assuming the legislative role of the General Assembly and from adopting binding resolutions that dictate domestic law for Member States. In some instances, the Council has sought to interfere in purely internal political matters that do not pose a threat to international peace and that, in any case, are being dealt with at the regional level. In our view, the usurpation by the Council of the mandates of other organs, including the Assembly, is not justifiable.

A few days ago, we witnessed a positive development in the southern Africa subregion when the leaders of the people of Zimbabwe put aside their political differences and joined hands to form a Government of national unity. We congratulate the people of Zimbabwe on that historic feat. We urge the international community to support the people of Zimbabwe in rebuilding their economy and in determining their destiny in an atmosphere of national harmony and peace. We also urge the leadership of Zimbabwe to ensure adherence to the principles of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, as such adherence will have a catalytic effect on socio-economic initiatives in which Zimbabwe is involved.

Finally, we urge the Security Council to support efforts to bring to an end the unilateral economic and financial embargo that has, for decades now, been imposed against Cuba. We further urge the Council to intervene more decisively on behalf of the people of Palestine and Western Sahara, who have, also for decades, been denied the right to self-determination.

Lesotho is supportive of any efforts that will bring about lasting and sustainable peace in the Middle East and in other conflict areas in Africa, the Balkans and around our globe. We recall that in his report "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all", former Secretary-General Kofi Annan said: "Our guiding light must be the needs and hopes of peoples everywhere" (*A/59/2005, para. 12*).

Such is the call and challenge staring the United Nations in the face: to ensure a peaceful, safe, dignified and prosperous world in our time and for posterity.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Hassan Wirajuda, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

Mr. Wirajuda (Indonesia): May I first congratulate Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. I am sure that he will lead our deliberations with great wisdom and skill. I also wish to congratulate his predecessor, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, for ably guiding our sixty-second session.

It is timely and wise that we focus our deliberations on the global food crisis and on the democratization of the United Nations. While those two issues appear to be vastly different, they have more to do with each other than meets the eye. For democracy means nothing if a part of humankind is well fed while a larger part of it goes to bed hungry every night. Human equality is a mirage in any country where a part of the population struggles against obesity while a larger part of it wonders where the next meal is coming from.

I do not exaggerate. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, food prices will remain high for the next three to five years. Rice stocks are falling to their lowest level since the mid-1970s. Wheat stocks are sinking to their lowest since 1948. Compounding the situation is the explosive growth of the world population.

There is a huge unfilled demand for food. Food riots have already erupted in parts of the Middle East, Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. In 33 countries, especially those with fragile States, there is a real and present danger of social and political unrest because people are hungry. We must vigorously address the problem of global food insecurity. Otherwise, peace is at risk in the developing world and in pockets of poverty in the developed world. What the world needs today is a new Green Revolution — a Green Revolution that this time embraces the entire developing world, especially Africa. Developing countries must now put agriculture, especially food production, back into the core of their development agenda. For their part, the developed countries must put agriculture and food production into the core of their trade and aid programmes.

In that regard, the experience of Indonesia may be instructive. It is not easy to feed a population of 230 million, the fourth largest in the world, but there are no food riots in Indonesia. Last year, we had a surplus production of rice. We used that surplus to bolster our national stockpile. That has contributed to national stability. This year, we expect another surplus of 5 per cent, which brings production to 36 million tons. We are going to export part of that as our contribution to global food security.

We can do that because we have vastly improved our rice productivity by providing our farmers with microfinancing, improved seed varieties, cheap but appropriate farm technology and affordable fertilizers. We have thus developed some experience and expertise that worked for us and can work in other developing countries. We will continue to share those in the spirit of South-South cooperation.

Food security is a cause in which everyone must be involved. In that light, I firmly believe that this General Assembly of ours is called upon to take a number of concrete measures.

First, we can task the World Bank and the relevant United Nations bodies to develop ways and means of helping national Governments to spend more on agriculture and on rural infrastructures to empower small farmers.

Secondly, let us ensure that the appropriate United Nations bodies link up with regional mechanisms for food security, such as common food reserves and early warning systems on regional food

crises. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations has such an arrangement and so do other regional arrangements. The United Nations can serve as the hub, while the regional arrangements serve as the spokes of a global wheel for food security.

Thirdly, let us establish the framework for a global partnership on food security. We should ensure that the World Trade Organization Doha development negotiations reach a conclusion that supports increased food production. Let us make use of the forthcoming review of the Monterrey Consensus on financing for development as an opportunity to devise ways to fund the Green Revolution.

Let us be mindful, however, that agriculture does not always lead to a food harvest. It is even possible that an imprudent rush to produce biofuels will lead to a severe reduction of the food supply. It is true that by switching from fossil fuels to biofuels, we can cushion the impact of the skyrocketing of the world price of oil and thereby address the energy crisis. It is also true that, by making that switch in fuels, we reduce greenhouse gas emissions and thereby address the challenge of climate change.

It would be unwise and reckless, however, to address two crises by aggravating a third. We cannot allay the energy crisis and the crisis of global warming by deepening the global food crisis. That will only worsen the plight of humankind, but we can carry out a broad range of rational and coordinated policies and initiatives that address those crises systemically. We can address the energy crisis by developing all alternative sources of available energy, which will help mitigate global warming.

Moreover, in the next 16 months we can advance the climate change agenda through the Bali Road Map, all the way from Bali to Copenhagen through Poznan. Indonesia is fully committed to that process. After hosting the Bali conference that produced the Road Map, we have joined the troika of host countries to give the process a push among world leaders. By 2009, we should produce an ambitious post-2012 global climate regime that will contain global warming to within two degrees Celsius in the next 20 years. But even before the process is concluded in Copenhagen, we in Indonesia are partnering with other countries to enhance our tropical forests and coral reefs in an effort to reduce carbon emissions.

Even as we face the challenge of global warming in the physical world, we must also deal with the reality of a global chill in the politico-security field. Symptoms of that chill are the military tensions that have arisen in Eastern Europe.

There is also a new arms race. There is more military spending now than there was at the end of the cold war. Moreover, the conflicts and tensions of a year ago are still with us. The dream of establishing a Palestinian State by the end of this year has virtually crumbled. The Iraqi and Afghan conflicts keep raging on. North Korea, the subject of so much uncertainty today, is backsliding from its commitment to dismantle its nuclear weapons programme. The nuclear issue in Iran remains unresolved.

In the face of those conflicts and tensions, the Security Council should have been more decisive. That the Council has failed to resolve them is a cause for concern. Of the issues that the Council has failed to resolve, two are of great concern to Indonesia, namely, those recent cases that directly infringe on the principle of the territorial integrity and political independence of States, both involving external intervention that led to the secession of a part or parts of a State. Both cases involved major Powers.

It is of the greatest importance to Indonesia and, I believe, to many developing countries that those recent cases do not set an ill-advised and dangerous precedent. Developing countries in the midst of nation-building and State-building would be extremely vulnerable to such precedents. The danger is that it takes only one misstep to kill principles that have been enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, such as the principle of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. If we kill those principles, we have killed the ideal that holds the United Nations together.

The sovereignty of States must be preserved if there is to be a democratic spirit in international relations. That idea is essential because, without democracy, a world organization like the United Nations cannot be effective. Indeed, the failure of the Security Council to come to grips with recent challenges to global security is due largely to the fact that it is not democratic enough.

To make the Council more democratic, the use of the veto power of the permanent five must be regulated. The misuse of the veto by any one permanent member should no longer be allowed to

paralyse the entire Council. Democratization of the Council also means an equitable distribution of its membership, not only in terms of geographical representation, where we already have imbalances, but also in terms of constituencies. Hence, the world's major civilizations should be proportionately represented. The world's community of 1.1 billion Muslims must be represented on the Council if it is to be truly democratic.

The need for democratization is also deeply felt at the regional level. In the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), I am pleased to say, we have responded to that need. The cause of democracy is gaining ground in the region as we transform ASEAN from a loose association into a true community that is firmly committed to the promotion of democracy and human rights. All members, without exception, strongly share that commitment.

It is in that spirit that Indonesia is launching the Bali Democracy Forum this December. It will be not an exclusive forum among democracies, but an inclusive and open forum for the countries of Asia to share their experiences and best practices in fostering democracy. A true democracy is always homegrown; it is never anything that is imposed from outside.

Meanwhile, we in Indonesia continue to tend to our young democracy. We are seeing to it that democracy takes root, not only by holding free elections, but also by working hard to provide good governance, to sustain a system of checks and balances among the three branches of Government, and to strengthen the roles of the mass media and civil society in our national life. Thus we pursue the democratic ideal: democracy at the level of the United Nations, democracy at the regional level and democracy within the nation.

At each of those levels, we hope to see nations and people taking control of their lives and taking part in the decision-making processes that shape their future. The realization of that ideal will give full meaning to the first three words of the Charter of the United Nations. Indeed, "We the peoples" is what democracy is all about.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Franck Bianchéri, Government Councillor for External Relations and for International Economic and Financial Affairs of Monaco.

Mr. Bianchéri (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to convey to the President my congratulations on his election and to acknowledge, through him, the Latin American and Caribbean States that made his presidency of the General Assembly possible. Let me assure him and the other Assembly officers that my delegation will support them throughout the sixty-third session of the General Assembly.

I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his resolute action in favour of peace and reiterate to him our sincere and full support.

Finally, allow me to state what a great honour it is for me to take the floor today for the first time at the rostrum of this prestigious Hall.

The great and deeply missed poet Aimé Césaire said: "A civilization that is unable to resolve the problems that beset it is a decadent civilization." We know what the sufferings of our civilization are. We have identified the solutions needed to treat them. The issue at stake here is implementing those solutions.

Eight years ago, in this very Hall, all the States Members of the United Nations adopted the Millennium Declaration, the decisive tool in the fight against poverty, to promote peace, security and human rights, and to ensure a sustainable environment. It provided the framework for eight precise goals accompanied by clear time frames — the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

My message today is a simple one. The international community cannot afford to fail in the implementation of the MDGs, in spite of the threefold food, energy and environmental crisis seriously affecting the whole planet. To achieve the goals that we set ourselves at the dawn of the new millennium, we will have to step up our efforts and pursue concerted action in the only universal forum we have — the United Nations.

Eight years ago, we drew up together a scorecard with quantified goals and defined the steps to be taken to reduce poverty, fight hunger in the world and combat pandemics. Eight years ago, the situation was very alarming; we could not have imagined that things were to get worse.

Since then, we have been faced with the energy crisis and increasingly scarce resources, the food crisis and soaring prices of basic food products, and the

climate crisis resulting from the impact of human activities on the environment. Adding to that already very dark picture, we must now face the financial crisis, whose repercussions continue to be felt and whose full impact is yet to be seen.

Each country is suffering the consequences of those crises in a different way depending on its geography, its economy and its commercial and financial market exposure; and each country is attempting to face them with its own means. The Principality of Monaco, within its capabilities, has chosen to fight two of those crises — the food crisis and the climate crisis — with the resources at its disposal.

Much of the progress achieved in recent years in helping those populations suffering from hunger and malnutrition has been erased by soaring increases in the price of basic foodstuffs. Two billion human beings are seriously at risk even as world cereal production has reached a record high in 2008. The African continent, and in particular sub-Saharan Africa, with 60 per cent of its population affected by the crisis, is once again the worst-affected continent.

It remains nonetheless undeniable that the right to food is among the basic human rights. During the High-Level Conference in Rome last June, the international community adopted the Declaration on World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy. Monaco fully supports the measures advocated in the Declaration and joins the call for the establishment of a world partnership centred on the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis.

A year ago, His Serene Highness Prince Albert II announced here his decision to substantially increase Monaco's official development assistance (ODA). The Principality's Government is sparing no effort to reach the target of allocating 0.7 per cent of its gross national income by 2015 by increasing our ODA by 25 per cent every year and focusing its actions on the least developed countries.

In 2008, 22 countries, mainly located around the Mediterranean basin and in sub-Saharan Africa, have benefited from a development partnership with the Principality. In addition to that bilateral cooperation, Monaco contributes on a regular basis to large-scale programmes of the United Nations system, such as the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's

Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund, whose expertise and structures facilitate the greatest assistance to the poorest populations.

Moreover, climate change and the imbalances it creates have a direct impact on the sustainability of our actions for development. The climate crisis, desertification and the shortage of water resources have exacerbated the food crisis.

Antoine de Saint Exupéry said: "We do not inherit the Earth from our parents; we borrow it from our children." Pursuing that analogy, the international community is not allocating sufficient funds to repay that loan.

Under the leadership of our Head of State and in collaboration with the Prince Albert II Foundation, the Government has committed itself actively in the International Polar Year to raise awareness among as many people as possible of the consequences of global warming. In that regard, the Arctic ice cap deserves all our attention since it serves as both an indicator of the consequences of global warming and as a vector of climate change through its gradual disappearance.

Last year, when adopting the resolution on oceans and the law of the sea, member States expressed their deep concern over the vulnerability of the environment and the fragility of ecosystems of the polar regions, particularly the Arctic Ocean and the Arctic ice cap. At Monaco's initiative, the decision on sustainable development of the Arctic region was adopted at the tenth special session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, which was held in the Principality in February 2008.

We will pursue our commitment to that cause in the coming months when Monaco will host meetings on the Arctic: the first in November 2008, organized by the French presidency of the European Union, and the second organized by UNESCO early next year. I would also note that the Principality has solemnly confirmed its interest in the polar regions by acceding to the Antarctic Treaty on 31 May, and that His Serene Highness Prince Albert II will join a scientific mission to Antarctica in January.

Notwithstanding the obstacles we have encountered on the road since 2000, we have to stay on track. Indeed, let us roll up our sleeves, consult each

other and work together to multiply our forces and create genuine synergy.

I would like to reiterate here the deep commitment of the Principality of Monaco to the United Nations, the only genuinely universal organization, which has human rights and the promotion of dialogue among nations at its very core. The Charter of the United Nations guarantees the sovereign equality of States and the rule of law. Monaco has been a Member of the United Nations for 15 years. Since joining, our small Principality has covered a lot of ground on the international scene, becoming a member of the Council of Europe in 2004 and, very recently, joining the Union for the Mediterranean.

Without the United Nations, it is doubtful that human rights would have acquired their universal status, which today is indisputable. This year and next, many anniversaries remind us yet again of the essential role of the United Nations: the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, and the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The world has changed since the San Francisco Conference. Today, our task is to modernize the United Nations and ensure that its institutions adequately reflect our democratic principles and new geopolitical balances. As His Serene Highness Prince Albert II stated here last year, Monaco supports the expansion of the Security Council.

Only the combined efforts of all partners will allow us to make real progress in the fight against poverty, to promote health care and education, improve access to water and protect the environment. As indicated in the June 2008 recommendations of the MDG Africa Steering Group, the primary responsibility for achieving the MDGs remains with African Governments, which have shown tremendous leadership in recent years and launched ambitious programmes to attract the financial support of their development partners.

We have seen real progress since 2000, in particular in the area of health. Monaco, for its part, contributes to various WHO and UNICEF programmes and participates in efforts to combat HIV/AIDS, sickle cell anaemia, tuberculosis and malaria. However, the

greatest national efforts, if made on an individual basis and without coordination, will not be enough to fight the scourges that affect our planet, and the African continent in particular.

The evaluation of ODA policies, the sharing of good practices, the coordination of development assistance, partnership with the private sector, microfinance and the pursuit of alternative revenue sources are all instruments that, together with the priority to be given to the central role of women in the economy, will enable us to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in the next seven years.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Norov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Mr. Norov (Uzbekistan) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session and wish him every success in his work.

In the context of the agenda of the current session of the General Assembly, I would like to address the following issues, which we consider to be of the utmost importance and are directly relevant to the security and sustainable development of the Central Asian region.

First are the issues related to the continuing intensification and escalation of confrontation in Afghanistan, the increasing radicalization of the situation and the provocative terrorist statements by the fighters. Despite the enormous efforts and measures by the international community and coalition forces to support peace in Afghanistan, the situation, unfortunately, is deteriorating. The civilians are perishing.

What further exacerbates the situation in Afghanistan is the growing volume of drug trafficking. Today the production of opium in Afghanistan accounts for more than 8,000 tons, or over 90 percent of global production. It must be taken into consideration that drug trafficking is becoming one of the important sources of financing for fighters, destabilizing the situation in Afghanistan itself and in neighbouring States.

From this high rostrum, I would like to state again that we are deeply convinced that recent developments in the situation in Afghanistan show ever

more clearly that the Afghan problem cannot be resolved by the use of armed force, military means and increasing militarization alone. The war, which has been ongoing for close to 30 years, has destroyed both the economic and social infrastructure, led to the impoverishment of the population and, we must admit, has deprived people of any belief in a future and has provided fertile ground for recruiting more and more fighters.

The developing situation dictates the need to radically reconsider the approaches to resolving the Afghan problem. It is our firm belief that our main priorities must be providing targeted economic aid to Afghanistan, building and moulding economic and social infrastructure, ensuring employment opportunities and resolving the acute problem of combating poverty.

It is necessary to do everything we can to ensure respectful attitudes to national and religious values and the centuries-old traditions and customs of the multinational and multi-faith people of Afghanistan, and on that basis to bring together the conflicting forces. An important instrument for achieving such goals could be a return to the successful Six plus Two group on Afghanistan that successfully functioned in the middle of the 1990s under the auspices of the United Nations and transforming it into a Six plus Three group by taking into consideration contemporary realities and including in its make-up neighbouring States, Russia and the United States, and NATO.

As the President of Uzbekistan, Mr. Islam Karimov, has repeatedly underscored, the realization of such an initiative — which has already been called for from a number of international rostrums — could be a worthy alternative in achieving peace, stability and the revival of Afghanistan.

The outcomes of the high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals that took place on 25 September 2008 demonstrated that the international community needs to resolutely seek concrete results in achieving the goals in the sphere of development as formulated in the Millennium Declaration.

In that context, all of us share responsibility for the reasonable use of natural resources, including the transboundary rivers in Central Asia. Experience itself has shown that disregarding well-known United Nations declarations and international standards on the joint use of water resources of transboundary rivers can

lead to very serious and at times tragic ecological disasters, as borne out by the ongoing catastrophe of the drying up of the Aral Sea, with all of its unforeseen consequences for the tens of millions of people in the region.

According to the fundamental provisions of United Nations conventions, all decisions on the use of the water of transboundary rivers in Central Asia, including the construction of hydropower facilities, must in no way inflict damage on the ecology of the region or infringe on the interests of the populations of neighbouring countries, nor should they upset the established balanced use of the water of transboundary rivers by all States in those rivers basins. In the case of damage, all measures must be taken to remove or mitigate such damage, and, if necessary, the issue of compensation must be raised.

We are convinced that compliance with those requirements must be mandatory in the implementation of various projects such as building hydropower facilities in Central Asia, including compliance by international financial institutions that wish to participate in such projects.

We are also convinced of the importance of expanding cooperation and strengthening interaction between the United Nations and the International Fund to Save the Aral Sea. In this respect, we consider it timely and necessary to grant the Fund observer status in the General Assembly, and we call upon Member States to support the draft resolution on this matter during the Assembly's sixty-third session.

This year in Uzbekistan we will widely observe the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and a programme of action dedicated to that most significant event has been approved. As of 1 January 2008, Uzbekistan fully abolished the death penalty and introduced habeas corpus, a democratic principle of justice. The adoption of the law on guaranteeing the rights of the child and the ratification of the International Labour Organization Minimum Age Convention and Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour have become important steps in ensuring human rights in Uzbekistan. We have adopted a national plan for implementing the commitments undertaken in those Conventions. Aware of the urgency of the problem of human trafficking at both domestic and international levels, in April 2008 Uzbekistan adopted its law against human trafficking.

Committed to the ideals and principles of human rights, Uzbekistan advocates gradual reforms and changes with the main purpose of ensuring peace in society and greater well-being of the people.

In conclusion, I want to underscore once again that Uzbekistan stands ready to engage in further constructive multilateral interaction within the United Nations framework to address the urgent issues on the agenda of the international community.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Dora Bakoyannis, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece.

Ms. Bakoyannis (Greece) (spoke in French): Sophocles said that all mankind is subject to error. We are gathered here in this Assembly in order to limit the scope of those errors and to ensure respect for the mandate of the United Nations. My Government fully agrees with the objectives and ideas expressed by President Nicolas Sarkozy as President of the European Union (see A/63/PV.5).

There is much that remains to be done and many obstacles to be overcome: armed conflict, hunger, poverty, environmental degradation, terrorism, organized crime, human trafficking, lack of respect for human rights and the abuse of power. All these things threaten what we wish to build in the United Nations: a community of States that enjoys progress, peace and prosperity.

Add the economic crisis the world faces now to those scourges, and it becomes difficult not to see the future as dark and menacing. As the poet Yeats described, we live in a world where

(spoke in English)

"The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity."

(spoke in French)

During this critical period, every country must make a choice: either to focus solely on its own limited interests and promote nationalistic ends in order to distract people's attention from danger throughout the world, or to look outwards, to open its mind and borders and to commit to warning people that the only way to face threats successfully is to do so together.

The history of Greece and the character of the Greek people are such that we have chosen the second path. It

was in ancient Greece that society for the first time developed those ideals that are cherished today by free people throughout the world: democracy, equality and individual rights. More recently, we have lived through several wars, poverty and deprivation. Nevertheless, we endured, and we have been able once again to grab hold of the ideas that we were the first to profess.

We have not forgotten, however, what it is like to feel fear and need. This is why we will continue to work closely with all States, organizations and institutions to ensure that all people can live in security and can prosper and thrive.

The United Nations must be at the helm of this effort. In order to play its role efficiently, the United Nations needs increased support from us all, particularly in its efforts to develop and improve. Discussions about Security Council reforms and the need to breathe new life into the General Assembly have been going on for far too long. We hope that, starting at this session, today, concrete measures will be adopted to reach our objective.

(spoke in English)

This year we celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Unfortunately, gross violations of human rights persist throughout the world, and we Member States need to redouble our efforts to reduce them. The Human Rights Council could be a powerful force in that struggle, and Greece has decided to become a candidate for membership for the term beginning in 2012. We ask for the Assembly's support and trust.

Along with protecting human rights, the United Nations must strengthen its efforts to alleviate the bitter poverty that still grips many parts of the world. We need to increase trade for development, and we regret the lack of progress in the Doha Round. In 2000, we agreed on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), probably the most ambitious development project ever undertaken by man. In terms of time, we are halfway there. Yet a lot remains to be done. The progress achieved so far is jeopardized by higher prices, particularly for food and oil, and the global economic slowdown. Our success will be judged primarily in Africa.

We believe that one way to help jumpstart development in Africa is to involve women in the economy more extensively. Providing entrepreneurial

opportunities to women at local, national and regional levels will allow them to strengthen their role in society, increase their involvement in education and ultimately allow them to play a more active part in decision-making. As the French social theorist Charles Fourier said more than 200 years ago, "The extension of women's rights is the basic principle of all social progress."

The challenge of climate change, if not addressed, threatens not only the MDGs but also the economic and social stability of our world. We have to achieve, in 2009, a new, truly global agreement with ambitious, binding mitigation targets. We also need a much stronger effort on adaptation, where there is a huge deficit between the needs and the actual financing provided. That deficit is exacerbated by the fact that no matter what we do, we are locked in for significant climate change in the next three to four decades, which is going to especially affect the less developed countries. It is an unjust reality that those that are least to blame for the creation of the problem are to suffer most.

Greece is moving to face this challenge. We have signed, this week in New York, agreements with the African Union and the Caribbean Community for the funding of adaptation projects, and we plan to do the same with the Alliance of Small Island States, providing a total of €20 million for the next four years. One might argue that this is just a drop in the adaptation bucket. It is, however, a drop in an empty bucket.

Migration is a critical element in the development of neglected regions, and the United Nations High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development has taken the lead in dramatizing the link. By hosting the third Global Forum on Migration and Development in the fall of 2009, Greece aims to provide a platform on which to explore solutions and initiatives for the benefit of all countries and especially for the immigrants themselves.

As heartbreaking as the suffering of immigrants and refugees often is, nothing can compare to the misery involved in human trafficking. Young women who leave their homes in search of a better livelihood are exploited, brutalized and forced into a life of unspeakable depravity by the traffickers in human misery who are involved in the international sex trade. I say it is time for the international community to say "Enough!" I urge all the members of the United

Nations to begin working together forcefully to put an end to this blight on human dignity.

Along with protecting the weak and vulnerable, the United Nations has the responsibility to act forcefully and to protect the world from the kind of fanaticism and extremism that cripples any social programme. Terrorism poses a major threat to the security of our countries, to the stability of our democratic societies and to the rights and freedoms of our citizens. Around the world, whether in Afghanistan or Pakistan, Iraq or Yemen, the international community must show its strong commitment to combating terrorism while protecting human rights and the rule of law.

On regional security, Greece is preparing to assume the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) next January. The OSCE — the world's largest regional security organization — can be a forum for frank and fruitful talks on security issues and can contribute effectively to such crucial concerns as early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. Finland, the current Chair, has made a major effort to promote positive discussions among the OSCE States, and Greece intends to continue that policy and try to resolve outstanding issues.

The crisis in South Ossetia has created a volatile situation that affects stability in all the South Caucasus and has exacerbated international tension. Greece's position on that crisis is rooted in the principles that have always guided our foreign policy — peaceful settlement of disputes and respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States. In both the European Union (EU) and NATO, we supported the six-point agreement that helped end conflict in the area, but we are anxious to see measures that will alleviate the anger and mistrust that now pervade the region.

In the broader Middle East, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is at the root of most of the problems, and the region requires a comprehensive and lasting solution. I think that we all agree that the peace process relaunched last year at the Annapolis conference has the potential to achieve tangible results and merits the strong support of all of us.

In Lebanon, we welcome the presidential election, the formation of the National Unity

Government and the resumption of the national dialogue. Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity should be respected, in conformity with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Turning to our immediate neighbourhood, Greece is committed to a South-Eastern Europe where all countries belong to the European and Euro-Atlantic families. We were as pleased to welcome Croatia and Albania to NATO a few months ago as we were to welcome Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union last year. We have been encouraged also by the recent developments in Serbia, a country which grows closer to Europe every day.

In the same spirit, we agree with our NATO allies and European Union partners that invitations to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia should be extended when a mutually acceptable solution is reached on the name issue. Greece will continue to be guided by the letter and the spirit of Security Council resolutions 817 (1993) and 845 (1993) on that issue, and I want to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, Mr. Matthew Nimetz, for their commitment and their tireless efforts to settle the dispute.

The new reality of Kosovo requires continued attention from the international community. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo has done a good job providing security for Kosovo's population, and its successor, the European Union Rule of Law Mission Kosovo, should assume its responsibilities as soon as possible.

Beyond the Western Balkans, Greece continues taking fruitful initiatives in the spirit of international law and the United Nations Charter to broaden and strengthen cooperation with Turkey. We are convinced that modern Turkey, with a clear European orientation, will add to the stability of our region. We therefore support the European aspirations of Turkey as it moves to meet the prerequisites set out in the negotiating framework of the European Union. But words must be matched with deeds. The principles of good-neighbourly relations and peaceful settlement of disputes with other nations are essential preconditions. Yet 34 years after the 1974 invasion of Cyprus, a sovereign United Nations and European Union member State, Turkey continues to occupy over one third of the island's territory with nearly 40,000 troops. That unacceptable situation is a flagrant violation of

international law, a threat to the security and welfare of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots alike, and a serious obstacle to the stabilization of the region.

Greece has consistently supported Cyprus in its natural and justified desire to see the withdrawal of all occupation forces as part of a settlement for its reunification as a bizonal, bicomunal federation with intercommunal equality, a single sovereignty, a single citizenship and a single international persona. Relevant United Nations resolutions and principles exist to provide the framework for a mutually acceptable solution.

We thus welcomed the recent decision by Cypriot President Dimitris Christofias and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat to resume negotiations under the auspices of the Secretary-General. We believe that a viable solution can be achieved by the Cypriots themselves through negotiations between the two communities without artificial deadlines and arbitration. We shall continue to do everything possible to facilitate a settlement, and we hope that Turkey will also demonstrate flexibility and goodwill towards that end.

As is obvious to all of us, the United Nations is once again beset by a host of troubles that will require the patience of Job to endure and the strength of Hercules to confront. As individual States, we have no hope of marshalling the strength to contemplate, let alone battle, the dangers facing us. But together, through the United Nations, we can find the resolve not only to confront those awesome challenges but to subdue the threat that they pose for humankind.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Kofi Esaw, Minister of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of Togo.

Mr. Esaw (Togo) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first of all to congratulate Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. He can count on the full cooperation of the Togolese as he carries out his noble task. We would also like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for the insight and determination which he has demonstrated in leading the Organization since taking up his post.

At the high-level meeting on Africa's development needs, held here on 22 September,

Member States noted that despite the efforts that have been made, the situation in Africa demands continued serious consideration by the international community in order to help Africa face up to the many challenges it faces. It was also stressed that the fight against poverty and the fight for sustainable development cannot succeed without considerable official development assistance and fairer trade between nations.

In that regard, it is unfortunate that the North-South dialogue has been exhausted, as evidenced by the recent failure of the World Trade Organization negotiations in Geneva. Indeed, while international trade should become a tool for development, the balance of global economic power, which was responsible to a great degree for the dependence of countries of the South on their partners in the North, will continue to deteriorate. Most countries perceive globalization as the status quo, which makes the objectives of development and social justice even more difficult to achieve. To think that, when the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted in 2000, many of us were hopeful that they would be achieved. For that reason we call upon the international community, especially the countries of the North, to respect the commitments made.

We note with concern that today new and even greater challenges are being added to the long list of those which our States already face. The sharp rise in the price of oil and other raw materials, as well as the increasing demand for energy, along with the effects of the global food and financial crises are among these new challenges.

The current food crisis will not fail to have catastrophic consequences if aid to agriculture is not reviewed and increased; it is unfortunate that such assistance was cut by half between 1992 to 2000. It should also be stressed that few resources have been allocated to agricultural infrastructure, to irrigation and to supplying water to the population.

We venture to hope that the new partnership established on 4 June in Rome between the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, the United Nations, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme will contribute to an appropriate response to the situation.

Togo has suffered the negative effects of a long political and economic crisis. However, since President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé's accession to power in May 2005, the Togolese Government has sought suitable solutions to the major concerns of the Togolese people by implementing a pragmatic policy based on national reconciliation, poverty reduction and strengthening democracy and the rule of law.

In that context, the head of State worked to conclude a comprehensive political agreement in August 2006, which was signed by the major political parties and which opened the way for the holding of legislative elections in October 2007. There is little need to remind members that those elections took place in a peaceful, transparent and safe environment. They led to the establishment of a broad-based Government and a pluralistic National Assembly, which shows the commitment of the head of State to strengthen the democratization process in an atmosphere of understanding and national unity.

We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our thanks to the friendly countries and multilateral partners that have fully resumed their cooperation with Togo following the implementation of the agreements signed. In order to consolidate that commitment process, the Togolese Government is working tirelessly to see through the institutional and constitutional reforms provided for by the comprehensive political agreement.

In the legal field, it has undertaken to modernize the justice system, so as to guarantee its independence. In the same vein, national consultations aimed at establishing a Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission were launched on 15 April 2008. The Commission will be charged with shedding light on acts of political violence committed in the past and finding ways to compensate the victims. The results of those consultations have just been submitted to the head of State.

Similarly, in its search for better strategies to fight corruption and improve good economic governance, Togo recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the African Peer Review Mechanism, by which it agrees to submit to periodic reviews by the other members of the African Union (AU) and to be directed by the jointly adopted parameters for political, economic and financial governance in Africa. As part of the financial reform,

soon the post of auditor-general and a national audit office will be set up. A Government audit programme is in the process of being finalized.

The torrential rainfall that struck our country last July sorely tested our Government's efforts. It led to countless human injuries and material and financial losses, including the collapse of a dozen bridges, the flooding of railways and the destruction of roads, villages and fields. That disaster, the second of its kind in a year, makes it very difficult to move from region to region.

The solidarity shown to our country enabled us to assist the affected and to start rebuilding some of the infrastructure. Here, I should like to express our deep gratitude to Ghana, Benin, France, China, the United States of America, Brazil and all the other countries, organizations and institutions that helped us.

As members can see, in spite of our efforts the overall situation in our country is far from satisfactory. Therefore, our country deserves more substantial support. In that regard, the positive results of the Togo Development Partners Conference, held in Brussels on 18 and 19 September, leads us to hope that the international community is ready to play a decisive role in assisting our country to get back on its feet.

We would like once again to express our profound thanks to all those who contributed to the success of that conference, in particular the European Union, France, Germany, the United States of America, Portugal, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, the Niger, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Islamic Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Central Bank of West African States, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union.

For decades, Togolese diplomacy has worked to strengthen friendship and cooperation among States and peoples. Thus, at both the bilateral and the multilateral levels, Togo has always done its utmost to achieve the peaceful settlement of disputes with the purpose of maintaining peace and stability wherever threatened. Those actions, undertaken through dialogue and consultation, are part of the efforts made by African countries to ensure better living conditions for their populations. Togo believes that dialogue and consultation must be the preferred ways to settle ethnic, religious or territorial disputes, which are true

obstacles to harmonious coexistence among States and peoples.

Along those lines, it must be recalled that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is at the core of the political and security problems in the Middle East, continues to be the focus of the highest concern for the international community. In order to promote peace and stability in that region, the international community must make a greater effort to find a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

In that regard, Togo welcomes the ongoing dialogue between the parties and hopes that the various initiatives will lead to a comprehensive solution, based on the principle of two States, Israeli and Palestinian, living within secure and internationally recognized borders.

Afghanistan and Iraq, which are experiencing a major lack of security, deserve special attention. We therefore call on the international community to increase its assistance to the Governments of those countries in their fight against terrorism, so as to promote peace and reconstruction.

In Africa, while it is true that glimmers of hope are to be seen in the settlement of crises, one cannot but condemn situations such as those persisting in Darfur and Somalia. We call on the various actors to demonstrate more courage and political will to get out of the vicious circle of violence and, thus, give peace a chance.

Because of the orientation of its foreign policy, the Togolese Government endorses all initiatives aimed at preventing, fighting and eliminating the causes of conflict, in particular the trafficking of and illegal trade in small arms. For that reason, it did not hesitate to support the proposal to draft and adopt a binding international instrument on the trade in small arms. Along those same lines, Togo was involved in activities linked to promoting and safeguarding international peace and security, as demonstrated by its participation in the various peacekeeping operations of the United Nations, the African Union and ECOWAS.

Today more than ever, the world needs security and peace in order to devote its energies to eliminating hunger, illiteracy and disease. To that end, it is more urgent than ever to make concerted efforts to fight inequality, injustice and exclusion.

In our respective countries, we must build societies where humanism and solidarity will reign in peace and security. We believe that that is one of the purposes of the founders of the United Nations and which we must strive to achieve now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency The Honourable Paula Gopee-Scoon, MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon (Trinidad and Tobago): I am honoured to be afforded the opportunity to address the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. I also wish to extend my sincere congratulations to Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann on his election to the presidency. I am convinced that his wealth of experience, garnered over the years in the different capacities in which he has served and his strong conviction of the importance of multilateralism and respect for international law, will be brought to bear in a most positive and productive way on the proceedings of the session. Further, Trinidad and Tobago is gratified that Nicaragua and, by extension, Central America, has been graced with the distinct honour of guiding the work of the sixty-third session.

At the same time, my delegation wishes to express our heartfelt appreciation and admiration for the way in which His Excellency Srgjan Kerim of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia conducted the affairs of the General Assembly during the last session.

The Secretary-General must be commended, particularly for his untiring efforts in ensuring that humanitarian relief is brought to thousands of victims of natural disasters, including in the Caribbean. Given the increasing frequency and ferocity of hurricanes and other similar climatic phenomena, there is dire need for the provision of early warning systems and capacity-building programmes in vulnerable regions like the Caribbean, aimed at enhancing planning and preparedness and at mitigating the effects of such disasters. We applaud all efforts to bring relief to those affected.

The President returned to the Chair.

The recent disasters bring into sharp focus the imperative of purposeful action on the problems of climate change at the national, regional and international levels. Trinidad and Tobago is committed

to adopting concrete measures aimed at reducing its levels of greenhouse gas emissions, while at the same time promoting balanced industrialization and environmental sustainability.

Notwithstanding its current healthy endowment of hydrocarbon resources, Trinidad and Tobago recognizes the need to promote clean energy alternatives, the development of new and renewable energy options and the proper protection and management of the nation's forests. Indeed, the Government is putting into effect appropriate policies for substantial results in that area. We hope to achieve meaningful progress, in cooperation with development partners within the public and private sectors, both locally and internationally, and with civil society.

Cooperation at the international level is also indispensable to efforts aimed at addressing the current energy crisis. Trinidad and Tobago is seeking to partner with its African friends in order to, among other things, identify ways of developing long-term strategies for the sustainable development and utilization of their energy resources. That is in keeping with the pledge made by The Honourable Patrick Manning, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, in 2007, when he addressed the eighth Summit of the African Union, in Ethiopia. Since then, discussions have ensued with individual African States and with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), to advance the initiative. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is eager to work assiduously towards the attainment of our common objectives.

Trinidad and Tobago firmly believes that the United Nations must take the lead in the management of the global food crisis, in which we are confronted with a situation of losing thousands to hunger on an almost daily basis. We embrace the various multilateral initiatives to address that grave challenge, including the establishment by the Secretary-General of the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis in April 2008 and the adoption of its Comprehensive Framework for Action.

The eradication of extreme poverty and hunger is one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by 2015. We cannot allow the threat posed by the global food crisis to reverse the strides made so far by many developing countries to achieve that Goal. We must utilize all the resources at our disposal, including a recommitment to the Food and Agriculture

Organization of the United Nations (FAO), which was established to help developing countries and countries in transition modernize and improve agriculture and fisheries practices and to ensure good nutrition for their citizens. We must work in concert to provide that institution with the resources necessary to discharge effectively its mandates. If we fail to win the war against that common enemy, we will be compromising the right to food and by extension the right to life of millions of people.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has embraced a number of key policy initiatives that are designed to guarantee our citizens access to food of sufficient quality and quantity and to reduce the impact of the food crisis. Thousands of acres have been made available for diversified agricultural production. In addition, capital is accessible to farmers through our national Agricultural Development Bank.

Trinidad and Tobago recognizes that food security must also be pursued in the context of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Single Market and Economy, which provides the opportunity for the integration of production and cross-border investment in agricultural production in those countries which have greater agricultural potential and resources. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago therefore hosted, jointly with the CARICOM secretariat and the Food and Agriculture Organization, a regional agriculture donor conference in June 2007.

Similarly, like poverty and hunger, terrorism remains a major scourge on our societies and poses a direct threat to democratic institutions. It undermines the rule of law, infringes human rights and generally affects the well-being of its victims. Trinidad and Tobago is convinced that members of the international community must embrace multilateral solutions in the fight against terrorism. We remain committed to the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which is complementary to our own efforts to combat terrorism.

Trinidad and Tobago views the reform of the Security Council as indispensable to the transformation and further democratization of the United Nations. As a small island developing State, Trinidad and Tobago wishes to reiterate its position on Security Council reform, which emphasizes the need for, among other things, equity of access for small States to the Security Council and the need for representation of all regions

of the world in its permanent membership. Failure to reform the Security Council could serve to undermine that organ's authority as the body with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as its ability to discharge its other obligations under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

Trinidad and Tobago is convinced that the United Nations remains the principal vehicle for meaningful exchanges between members of the international community on matters of international concern. Such deliberations, in our view, constitute the bedrock of the democratization of the United Nations system and are for us a priority consideration. We recognize therefore the great value of the informal consultations on system-wide coherence aimed at making the Organization deliver as one.

Further progress on that issue during the current session is imperative for the United Nations development system to be able to provide Member States, particularly developing countries, with the assistance required to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the other internationally agreed development goals.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has charted a development policy to achieve the MDGs within the stipulated period, as well as to transform the country to developed status by the year 2020. The pace of economic growth over the past decade has fortunately enabled us to surpass MDG targets in achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality, empowering women and significantly reducing the level of poverty.

Trinidad and Tobago's development strategy exceeds the MDG targets in some respects. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has been able to provide free secondary and tertiary education to its citizens. In addition, 30 per cent of our cabinet ministers and members of parliament are women.

Regrettably, for many developing States, the achievement of the MDGs within the stipulated period appears to be elusive. We therefore urge all development partners to honour their commitments and pledges already agreed upon.

Another important international process to which Trinidad and Tobago attaches great importance is the review of the implementation of the Monterrey

Consensus on Financing for Development, which will be addressed at a follow-up international conference in Doha, Qatar, in November. The Monterrey Consensus, adopted by heads of State or Government in 2002, called for the mobilization of resources to assist developing countries in meeting the MDGs and recognized the importance of coherence and consistency within and among the international monetary, financial and trading systems in support of overall development. While there have been some advances under the key pillars of financing for development, they have not been sufficiently far-reaching. In the light of the current financial crisis, the timing for the convening of the follow-up conference is most timely and presents an opportunity for the forging of global partnerships in a spirit of solidarity. A key component for success will be an ongoing engagement between Governments and all stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society.

Trinidad and Tobago is committed to the regional integration movement of CARICOM and has continued to provide economic assistance to our CARICOM partners within the ambit of that multilateral framework and other bilateral arrangements. One such arrangement is Trinidad and Tobago's Petroleum Development Fund, a facility that only recently was drawn upon to provide substantial assistance to some of our Caribbean neighbours in the aftermath of recent hurricanes. Another is the CARICOM Trade Support Programme, a comprehensive loan facility of \$16.5 million that is aimed at improving the trade capacity of CARICOM States by providing assistance in the diversification of their economies and in improving trade capacity.

The Caribbean also falls prey to the nefarious trade in narcotics, to which the illegal proliferation of small arms and light weapons is linked. In an effort to confront these challenges, we have concluded with our neighbours the CARICOM Maritime and Air Space Security Cooperation Agreement to protect our borders from illegal activities. We recognize, however, the important role of the United Nations as the premier multilateral forum in providing assistance in areas such as capacity-building to augment our own resources. For the States of the Caribbean, a critical aspect of disarmament is the eradication of the illegal trade in small arms. Trinidad and Tobago therefore calls for

urgent action to complete the work on the elaboration of an arms trade treaty.

In the context of our efforts to address the challenge, we also wish to call again for consideration to be given to the inclusion of international drug trafficking as one of the crimes within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

It is of great significance to us that the very year we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute of the ICC, we also commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since its establishment, the ICC has been able to attract 100 States parties, issue arrest warrants and begin trials of persons accused of committing crimes of major concern to the international community. The perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes show flagrant disregard for the human rights of their victims, as well as for human rights law and humanitarian law, none of which should go unpunished.

The United Nations has played a seminal role in the promotion and development of international law, which has contributed to the maintenance of international peace and security and friendly relations among States. As a small State, Trinidad and Tobago views adherence to and respect for the rule of law as a bulwark against intrusions that could affect our territorial integrity, independence and economic development and the general well-being of our citizens. However, we are conscious of the need for international cooperation in the implementation of international legal obligations under various conventions that provide mutual benefits to Member States.

One area of which the United Nations can be justly proud is the conclusion of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The Convention has worked well since its adoption and entry into force, and it has provided legal certainty to activities carried out by States in different maritime zones. In keeping with our obligations under the Convention, Trinidad and Tobago is in the process of completing work on its submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf by May 2009 to extend its continental shelf jurisdiction beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured. We do so with full respect

for the sovereign right of other coastal States to make similar submissions to the Commission.

Our region is home to the International Seabed Authority, which is located in Jamaica. The Authority's mandate is derived from the Convention, and it is entrusted with the responsibility to administer the resources of the International Seabed Area, which is the common heritage of mankind. As in previous years, we again call on all members of the Authority to make every effort to attend its meetings.

In conclusion, Trinidad and Tobago wishes to reaffirm its faith in and commitment to multilateralism at the regional, hemispheric and international levels. Dialogue among States must always be the preferred option for solving the myriad problems that we face in an increasingly complex international environment. It is in recognition of this importance that Trinidad and Tobago has taken the bold decision to host in 2009 both the Summit of the Americas and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. Dialogue in those two bodies, which are microcosms of the United Nations, could also influence discussions at the United Nations, an institution that we must continue to transform, guard and protect, in order to be able to bequeath it to future generations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Gonzalo Fernández, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay.

Mr. Fernández (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay, one of the founding States of the United Nations, sees the fundamental principles of its foreign policy fully reflected in the Charter of this Organization.

For that reason, we believe it important at the outset to reassert the validity of those principles in the present international context and to emphasize once again the traditional Uruguayan position of full respect for international law, support for multilateralism, peaceful settlement of disputes, sovereign equality of States, rejection of the use or threat of use of force, non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States, the self-determination of peoples, the promotion and protection of human rights and international economic and social cooperation.

It is worth repeating that this list is not simply an inventory of good intentions, but of legal principles

and fundamental values. Their enshrinement in the Charter of the United Nations gives them the status of international law, to whose validity and enforcement all States must conform.

Furthermore, those principles are crucial guiding tools in a world that presents us today with major challenges. We, nations gathered here, have the moral and legal duty to find suitable solutions that will make peace and development the rule of coexistence for our peoples.

As we all know, a severe food crisis is currently afflicting too many countries throughout the world. If a sustainable and lasting solution is to be found, we must address the structural factors influencing and causing the crisis. Correcting the distortions in the multilateral trade system, in particular in agricultural trade, is certainly a decisive element in ensuring a plentiful supply of food that will meet the needs of the entire population of the planet.

Uruguay believes that, in addition to tackling this serious crisis with urgent measures, we must make progress towards a long-term solution. That inevitably means redoubling our efforts to strengthen the multilateral trade system and swiftly resuming the negotiations in the World Trade Organization. It is essential that we do so, particularly in the area of agriculture, in order to guarantee world food security and to avoid a reversion to protectionist practices that would only further aggravate the situation.

The food crisis is not the only crisis affecting us, however; another major challenge facing the world economy is undoubtedly that of energy. Here, as with agriculture, Latin America requires the technological cooperation of developed countries. Likewise, when it comes to developing the production of alternative energy sources, such as bioenergy and biofuels, research and technical assistance are essential if we are to benefit from the opportunities provided by such production without affecting food security or the environment. The United Nations has a crucially important catalytic role in that regard.

In addition, we cannot overlook the current financial crisis of the major developed countries, which demonstrates the global interconnectedness and interdependence among States. Although developing countries are certainly not the cause of the crisis, its effects afflict and punish the economies of emerging countries.

With regard to the environment and sustainable development, Uruguay is a party to the major international conventions in that area. While we have emphasized the importance of international cooperation, we have also always emphasized the individual responsibility of every State to actively protect the environment in its own territory and waters, and have always valued the vigilant participation of civil society in that regard.

That is why, while we receive significant investments that contribute to our industrial development, my country also exerts rigorous control over the environmental practices of the entities involved, applying internationally recognized standards and requiring the use of the most modern technologies available, with effective control over the environmental impact of those undertakings. The Uruguayan Government thus reaffirms its unwavering commitment to protecting the environment as a human right and as a fundamental component in the achievement of true sustainable development.

Another major issue on the agenda of the General Assembly is the Millennium Development Goals agreed by Member States in September 2000, which Uruguay has fully endorsed. In that context, Uruguay has taken firm steps to achieve the Goals. We need only highlight, among other policies with a significant social content, the recent launching of our comprehensive national health system — aimed at transforming the health-care model by prioritizing primary health care and prevention in order to guarantee a basic right of all citizens — as part of the social inclusion policy that Uruguay is implementing.

Given its strict adherence to international law, Uruguay is also firmly committed to consolidating international peace and security, as demonstrated by its status as one of the 10 major contributors of troops to United Nations peacekeeping operations and as the world's largest contributor per capita in terms of troop numbers. Our country is currently participating in 16 United Nations peacekeeping missions deployed in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe. Since we began to participate in peacekeeping missions, Uruguay has gained experience in matters related to reconstruction and peacebuilding in areas devastated by conflict, making great efforts to put an end to hostilities so that various societies and communities can agree on peace and achieve national reconciliation.

However, as our international experience has taught us, peacekeeping, while essential, is not sufficient to return affected countries to institutional normalcy and an orderly and peaceful life. That is why the strong involvement of the international community is needed in peacekeeping efforts to effectively ensure the building of stable, democratic and prosperous societies through robust institutional mechanisms for resolving their conflicts. For that reason, Uruguay submitted its candidature to the Peacebuilding Commission in February 2007. We hope to be able to contribute to the attainment of those noble objectives in that forum.

The cause of peace requires, in institutional terms, a strengthened and effective Organization. That brings us to the topic of the United Nations reform process. The negotiations in that regard have not proceeded with the scope and speed originally envisaged. Although the two recently established bodies, the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, have been in existence for a few years, we have not yet been able to move on to Security Council reform — which is essential — and only a few timid steps have been taken in the process of reforming the Secretariat and the General Assembly.

Uruguay reaffirms its support for the process of Security Council reform in the permanent and non-permanent membership categories. However, we will not support the creation of new members with the right of the veto, since we believe that the issue of extending the veto must not be included in the package to be agreed upon in the intergovernmental negotiations. Moreover, in keeping with its traditional position since the founding of the United Nations, our country disapproves of the right of veto, which is a privilege that runs counter to the full democratization of our Organization.

In the area of reform, we also view the One United Nations pilot project in two ways. We see it first as an instrument through which reform of the operational activities of the United Nations system could be put into practice; and secondly, as a cooperative exercise in areas of priority identified by the Uruguayan Government in the context of a national development strategy based on sustained and sustainable economic growth with equity and social justice. However, we understand that the programme should adapt itself to specific national priorities and needs. That is why no single model is applicable to all

pilot countries, given their inherent differences from one another.

I also wish to refer to a topic of particular relevance for Uruguay — the situation of so-called middle-income countries. Those countries find themselves in a paradoxical situation. Although there are certain indicators of economic growth, negative circumstances that hinder sustainable and sustained growth in the medium- and long-terms have not been taken into account, nor has it been possible to prevent dramatic erosion of some of the progress made. In particular and with dramatic effect, the well-known clear vulnerability of the economies of developing countries in a globalized world economy subjects them to the effects of external crises with clear, direct consequences, such as rising poverty and inequity in income distribution, as well as strengthened migratory trends, to mention just some effects that Uruguay has experienced directly.

Finally, in affirming its unwavering commitment to the fight against terrorism, Uruguay reiterates its rejection of all terrorist acts and vigorously condemns all attacks against civil populations and public infrastructure, the destruction of which adversely affects the civil population. Terrorism must be unequivocally condemned and cooperation between States must increase in order to ensure that such acts do not go unpunished.

We must be careful, however. The fight against terrorism must always be waged based on the rule of law, and consequently in the strictest respect for the standards of international humanitarian and human rights law.

The same applies to drug trafficking. Our country has continued its unrelenting fight against illegal drug trafficking. Our effort targets both supply and demand. Thanks to that policy and beyond our success in stamping out the illicit traffic in those substances, our country has been at the vanguard of our continent in terms of its policies to prevent consumption and treat those affected by drugs.

Both terrorism and drug trafficking severely compromise the full enjoyment of human rights, the safeguarding of which has been one of the strategic policies of the current Government. We want respect for human rights to be more than routine rhetoric; it should enjoy full expression in the daily life of its citizens. On that basis, our country has prioritized

strengthening legislation and the competent national bodies, and has sought to extend international human rights and to consolidate institutions that effectively protect and secure the international enjoyment of human rights and prevent their violation. In short, the protection of human rights is one of the central axes of the Republic's foreign policy and is without a doubt Uruguay's basic political institutional asset.

As is evident, the effective protection of human rights calls for a strong jurisdictional body to guarantee its application. In that context, the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) was a fundamental contribution to the progressive development of international law and an event of tremendous legal and political importance. In 2006, Uruguay enacted a national law pledging full cooperation with the ICC. Respectfully, we urge the international community as a whole to do the same in order to prevent genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity from going unpunished.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that, with conflicts threatening peace and international security and taking into account the growing interdependence of States as a result of globalization, it is now crucial to emphatically reaffirm the relevance of the United Nations as the lead body and ultimate multilateral forum for finding appropriate solutions to today's major global challenges.

The pursuit of multilateralism therefore implies a search for collective responses to international conflicts and problems, in accordance with international law and in the framework of the principles of the United Nations Charter, which regulates peaceful coexistence between nations. Indeed, we must uphold the ideals that inspired the establishment of the Organization. That is a civilizing project that we cannot abandon as it represents unfinished business that we owe it to ourselves and to generations to come to complete.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Karel Schwarzenberg, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.

Mr. Schwarzenberg (Czech Republic): Let me begin by extending my congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the important function of President of the General Assembly. You will steer the deliberations of this key body of the United Nations through a

difficult period of growing challenges to our common security and prosperity. Let me assure you of our full support in your endeavours. I also thank your predecessor, Mr. Kerim.

My country is in full preparation for an enormous task that has no precedent in our history. In January 2009, the Czech Republic will assume the responsibility of the presidency of the European Union. We will do our utmost to uphold our shared commitment to world peace and prosperity within that organization.

The European Union stands at the forefront of the efforts to strengthen the United Nations capacity to deliver effective international responses to global challenges. The Czech Republic is committed to playing its part and to further enhancing the European Union's contribution by searching for common responses. The motto of the upcoming Czech presidency, "Europe without barriers", reflects our desire to promote the removal of barriers not only within the European Union, but also between the Union and third countries. In our opinion, it is very much in line with the efforts to enhance cooperation and to strengthen the principle of effective multilateralism.

The agreements reached at the 2005 World Summit sparked some substantive reforms, but the process has reached a point at which it has become necessary to give it a new impulse for further progress. An important part of that progress is Security Council reform. A more representative and transparent Security Council will act with a greater international legitimacy and authority. The Czech Republic therefore welcomes the recent decision to launch the intergovernmental negotiations. However, the authority of the Security Council is being undermined by its inability to address some acute international issues. I call on the Council to reassert its authority in the maintenance of international peace and security and to shoulder its obligations.

The authority of the United Nations is being tested, and so are our political and moral responsibilities. By signing onto the Charter of the United Nations, all of our countries have committed themselves to living in peace and harmony and to respecting the principles of peaceful resolution of disputes and of refraining from the threat and use of force, except in self-defence. Today, as security is being challenged in too many parts of the world, those

basic principles, and the system of international law in general, need to be upheld as ever.

And yet, we have recently witnessed systematic provocations and, finally, a military aggression on the part of a powerful country, a permanent member of the Security Council, against its small neighbour with the aim of carving that neighbour up. That action was designed to create two tiny entities, totally dependent in their administrative, economic and military structures. Colonial Powers used to act in that way, and I would like to stress that alleged interests, privileged as they may be considered, cannot justify the violation of our highest common principles, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Therefore, I fully subscribe to the words pronounced by Sergey Lavrov here earlier today:

"We cannot tolerate any attempts to resolve conflict situations by violating international agreements or by the unlawful use of force. If we allow that to occur once, then we run the risk of unleashing it in the future" (A/63/PV.14).

However, how can one think of redesigning new Euro-Atlantic security structures without renewing the trust that has vanished over the past few months?

After the Czech Republic sent substantial humanitarian aid, it initiated an international support conference for Georgia, to be held next month in Brussels. We call upon the international community to help alleviate the suffering of the tens of thousands of people displaced by the conflict, as well as to help the country with post-conflict reconstruction. We insist that all internally displaced persons return home. The immediate task is to ensure that all military forces are withdrawn to pre-war positions. There is urgent need for the deployment of an international and impartial mission in Georgia to oversee the military withdrawals and ceasefire implementation. Let me stress once again, however, that a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict must be based on full respect for the principle of Georgia's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We need to step up efforts to combat international terrorism. The stakes remain high. With our deep condolences to the peoples of India and Pakistan, we strongly condemn the recent terrorist attacks in New Delhi and Islamabad. We must not be shaken, but must stand up to that scourge united, stronger and more determined. I was deeply moved by the condolences

expressed by my Pakistani counterpart. It is touching to hear that from someone whose country has suffered immensely from terrorism.

Promoting and maintaining international security requires concerted action. While there is a need for strengthened United Nations peacekeeping capacity, other organizations can effectively complement the work of the United Nations in areas where they have a comparative advantage.

We have all felt the pains of stabilizing a war-torn country like Afghanistan. Despite the persisting lack of security, the international community continues to support development even in remote areas. By establishing and running the provincial reconstruction team in Logar province, my country has undertaken a long-term commitment to contribute to the security and development of Afghanistan. Let me express our full support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Ambassador Kai Eide, and invite the United Nations to take a more active approach and enhance its involvement and assistance to Afghanistan. The Afghans need our support to turn President Karzai's words, "we must do what it takes to win the battle of Afghanistan's economic development" (A/63/PV.7), into reality. A concerted effort between the Government of Afghanistan, the United Nations and other key international players, including Pakistan, is a prerequisite to achieving that goal.

The cooperation of the United Nations, the European Union and NATO needs to continue to the benefit of the Balkan region as a whole. Looking into the future, let me assure Members that both democratic and prosperous Serbia and Kosovo do have a place in the European family and that the Czech Republic is ready to lend them a helping hand. We in the Czech Republic have always had long-standing and traditionally close and friendly relations with Serbia and are keen to develop them further.

The recent arrest and transfer of Radovan Karadzic to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia was a promising sign of cooperation of the new Serbian Government with the international community. I call on the Security Council to provide sufficient time to the Tribunal for the completion of its work.

The Czech Republic considers international criminal justice to be one of the pillars that uphold the basic values of the United Nations. The ad hoc

tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, as well as the Security Council decision of 2005 to refer the situation in Darfur to the International Criminal Court, must be supported in order to end impunity for the most serious crimes. Let me recall the Secretary-General's commitment at the opening of this general debate: "We have the means to combat impunity and must therefore do so" (A/63/PV.5, p. 3).

We need to undertake some bold steps in the area of weapons of mass destruction and non-proliferation. We should reduce the risk of those weapons being misused or falling into the hands of terrorists. The immediate task is to ensure a successful outcome of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons review process and the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

In that context, I would like to express our concern over the Iranian and North Korean nuclear programmes. We fully recognize the indispensable right of every country to exploit nuclear power for civilian purposes, but we should act when it could be diverted towards military purposes, in breach of international commitments.

My country was among those that has vigorously called for a new universal norm to prevent risks stemming from the use of cluster munitions. The Czech Republic will be among the first to sign the new Convention on Cluster Munitions this December. I am convinced that the more countries that join the Convention, the more profound and positive the effect it will have on the lives of countless individuals and communities.

Security goes hand in hand with development and human rights. In the sixtieth year of the existence of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there is still a long way to go from the merely formal commitments of Governments to achieving a universally shared respect for the rights and liberties of every human being.

In recent years, the United Nations human rights institutions have undergone long-awaited reform. However, our goals have been only partially achieved. Let me express my deep regret that the Human Rights Council has been unable to tackle several serious human rights situations in a timely and proper manner. Although the Council is putting meritorious effort into the newly established Universal Periodic Review mechanism, the political imbalance of its agenda and

the attempts to weaken the role of special procedures and non-governmental organizations further diminish the expectations of reform. Moreover, flouting the appeals of the international community, as was done by the Myanmar regime, has to be denounced.

The Czech Republic supports the principle of responsibility to protect formulated at the 2005 World Summit. The international community has the responsibility to protect peoples worldwide in cases where their Governments are unable or unwilling to do so. Just over the past few years, we have seen some quite tragic examples desperately requiring our attention. I therefore welcome the Secretary-General's efforts to advance that issue. A valuable contribution can also be made through the non-governmental initiatives of leaders such as Václav Havel, Kjell Magne Bondevik and Elie Wiesel. Earlier this week, I had the honour to host an event in New York aimed at presenting their thoughts and recommendations on the tragic human rights and humanitarian situation in North Korea.

This week, I took part in high-level meetings on Africa's development needs and on the Millennium Development Goals. We have already witnessed early successes and setbacks, and we realize that some goals are more difficult to achieve than others. Now, at the halfway point to the target date, we are well aware of how much needs to be done in the remaining seven years. Our commitment to development, and notably to Africa, must not wane.

At the end of this year, the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development will present an opportunity to review the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus of 2002. The conclusion of the ongoing talks on the Doha Development Agenda within the World Trade Organization should also bring the tangible benefits of further trade liberalization for developing countries. To make that happen, the European Union has already shown the necessary flexibility. Other key actors have to follow suit if the talks are to get back on track and be concluded soon. In that context, let me recall once again the Czech presidency's motto, "Europe without barriers".

Let me assure the Assembly that the Czech Republic fully supports the European Union (EU) commitments to intensify EU development assistance.

The Czech presidency of the Union will be yet another incentive for us to step up our development assistance.

Soaring food and commodity prices, as well as the negative impact of climate change, hamper international development. All those issues require strong political will. The new legal framework to reduce greenhouse gas emissions beyond 2012 is one of the most important issues. The Czech Republic is fully aware of the need to make significant progress towards the adoption of a new post-Kyoto agreement. The Czech presidency of the European Union will play an active role in that process, which will culminate in Copenhagen next year, where a new agreement should be adopted.

I have outlined just a few points that are awaiting our action. In many areas, time is running out. I would like to encourage all Members of this universal Organization to cooperate in our common efforts to make this world secure and prosperous. The Czech Republic is committed to doing its part.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Rais Yatim, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia.

Mr. Yatim (Malaysia): The Malaysian delegation congratulates you, Mr. President, on your election as the president of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session.

We are in a situation of unprecedented crisis. The skyrocketing prices of fuel and food have caused us distress and widespread hardship. Beyond that, the current financial and climate crises continue to tear the social fabric of Member States. To term it merely an economic crisis is to understate the case. Indeed, the sheer complexity and connectivity between food, fuel and energy, between finance and climate change, make the task of addressing those convergent crises so bedevilling.

It is here at the United Nations that the crises must be faced and resolved. If we fail to address and remedy those calamities, our role and responsibility in this body will be called into question.

Some have called the current situation, particularly the food crisis, a silent tsunami. I beg to differ. It has not been and is not silent. Instead, the rumblings have been heard for some time, most particularly in Africa. In 1974, the international community gathered in Rome to address the global

food crisis, and in 1996, again in Rome, we dedicated ourselves at the World Food Summit to eliminating hunger and malnutrition and to achieving sustainable food security for all.

We adopted seven commitments towards that end. It was estimated in 1974 that, if action was not taken, there could be 680 million hungry people in the world in 2010. The latest figure shows that, at present, 850 million people face hunger on a daily basis. Clearly, we have failed to take heed of the warnings made 34 years ago. Can we now ask what happened to those resolutions that we made?

Liberalization has fundamentally changed the market structure for food and energy sources. Those changes have allowed for greater international speculation. A clear evidence of speculation on the price of food can be found in the dramatic rise in prices. An increase of close to 40 per cent has been recorded within a six-month period, in some cases. In view of the volatility of food prices, Malaysia strongly supports efforts to promote agriculture and food production.

It is generally assumed that rising food prices automatically benefit all farmers equally. That is not the case. Due to the concentrated and vertically integrated nature of the global food trade, a good number of agribusiness companies control all aspects of cultivation and distribution. We are therefore now witnessing smallholders being squeezed out. They are unable to benefit from rising prices. At the same time, ironically, many have to purchase food items that are available in the market at very high prices.

The energy crisis has some of the same causes as the food situation. Underinvestment is one of those causes. Expectations of continued ample supply have been dashed due to speculation and increased demand. The causes of the fuel, food and climate change crises clearly lie in the unfulfilled hopes and broken promises of sustainable development. In Rio almost a decade and a half ago, the human family agreed that we would undertake concerted action to address the sustainable development challenge based, *inter alia*, on the principle of common but differentiated responsibility.

Yet, we are facing a crisis that could have catastrophic consequences. It would appear that we have not learned the lessons of history or avoided the habit of producing resolution after resolution minus the requisite pursuit and follow-up. Indeed, that is the root

cause of our stagnation in many areas of the Organization's responsibilities.

Therefore, the question is: what needs to be done? Allow me to make six suggestions.

First, the international community, in particular the developed world, should demonstrate greater political commitment. The focus of the countries of the developed world should be on fulfilling their 2008-2012 commitments and, in so doing, setting a standard for the entire world, rather than on trying to pass the burden of action on to the developing world.

Secondly, we must find the right mix in balancing the competing interests of the three pillars of sustainable development, namely, economic growth, social development and environmental protection.

Thirdly, the optimal mix between governmental and private-sector action must be found. Clearly, market forces and the private sector have a role to play in overcoming these convergent crises. However, the role of the Government is critical in terms of providing policy integration as well as balancing the competing interests of the three pillars of sustainable development.

Fourthly, further infrastructure development and the transfer of technology are critical elements in overcoming the present crises.

Fifthly, we must resolve long-standing issues that lie at the heart of world geopolitics today. In particular, we must resolve the problems in the world's most volatile regions — which, coincidentally, are some of the world's largest producers and distribution channels of oil. The United Nations must make a forward thrust in meeting the need for peace and security. Energy and food are truly needs of humanity. Therefore, the United Nations must introduce a synergy of human rights into the matter so that oil and food become basic rights of humanity.

And sixthly, long-term solutions must be found in order to stabilize the price of commodities. More particularly, the futures market must be organized and duly regulated so that it becomes a force of stability, not volatility, in prices. That must be coupled with continued research and development related to alternative energy, be it solar, nuclear or derivative fuel.

Malaysia recognizes certain realities. In the face of vehement protests, we have taken measures to reduce the level of fuel subsidies, which could have been untenable in the long run. We have also undertaken measures to reduce Government spending and to promote greater energy efficiency. Last July, leaders of the Developing 8 Countries, of which Malaysia is now Chair, agreed in Kuala Lumpur to make serious efforts to cooperate in increasing agricultural production and achieving greater food security. We urge the countries of the developed world to play their rightful greater role in addressing those convergent crises, given their greater wealth and capacities.

The present financial crisis being suffered by the United States threatens to engulf the entire world, although the vast majority of us did not enjoy the benefits when times were good. Somehow, the financial mantra of the United States has lost its magic. Casting our minds back to the Asian financial crisis in 1997, we cannot help but compare the scenarios. The troubles of Asian companies then were the result of outside forces, while the present troubles of United States financial companies are entirely of their own doing. It must be asked: why were the actions taken by the Governments of Asia — in particular, that of Malaysia — to save our own companies a decade ago deemed so wrong, while the present bailout of United States financial companies is deemed to be right? To ensure that such a debacle does not recur, let us today resolve to check the excesses of the so-called financial wizards whose alchemy has resulted in so much suffering. Malaysia supports the view that corporate captains should not sap their entities by receiving unbelievably high pay packages.

New threats to peace and security continue to pose additional challenges for the international community. Terrorism, transnational crime and piracy are but a few of the challenges that confront us. Already, the scourge of terrorism and piracy in international waters has taken its toll on many States. Malaysia, Japan and even Russia have become victims to acts of piracy thousands of miles away from their shores.

Just days ago, in August 2008, two Malaysian vessels were hijacked by pirates in the Gulf of Aden. Sixty-five Malaysians and 15 Filipinos on board those vessels are being held hostage in Somalia. In order to secure the release of the hostages and ensure the safe

navigation of our vessels in that area, Malaysia has taken steps in accordance with Security Council resolution 1816 (2008) and international law. My delegation stands ready to work closely with other States that share the same predicament. We urge the Security Council to immediately address the problem in an effective manner. My delegation also calls on States, particularly the littoral States in the region, to provide the means necessary to ensure the security of navigation in their waters.

Democracy, human rights and the rule of law are three important pillars of our political life. Those pillars, enshrined in the Malaysian Constitution, have bequeathed to us freedom and liberty, dignity and harmony, peace and security. Malaysia will protect and strengthen those sacrosanct pillars at all costs in order to ensure that all members of our multireligious and multi-ethnic society can continue to live with one another in peace, harmony and unity, while respecting diversity. We believe that good and harmonious relations among our various religious and ethnic groups are our greatest asset. We respect the rule of law, and no one is above the law.

Malaysia is concerned over recent attempts by certain powerful Member States to question the national laws of countries and the administration of justice under those laws. It needs to be restated: we have no right to meddle — in any form or manifestation, or under any pretext or circumstances — in the conduct of the internal affairs of other countries. If we so chose, we could question the legal basis of the Guantánamo detentions without trial, but we have not done so, inasmuch as we do not question societal behaviour in other jurisdictions. While same-sex fornication and marriage are acceptable in California, that does not mean that sodomy — which is a crime in many countries in Asia — is to be impugned or derided.

Let us remind ourselves of the purposes and principles set out in the United Nations Charter, as well as of the relevant provisions of the 2000 Millennium Declaration and the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit, which should be defended and upheld.

Democracy in Malaysia remains very vibrant and progressive. Basic rights continue to be guaranteed for each and every Malaysian citizen, and the rule of law via parliament remains central to our existence as a sovereign and independent nation.

It is here in the General Assembly that the entire world comes together in a true spirit of common resolve and partnership. That presupposes the creation of an international order and a reformed United Nations that reflect not only the current and future realities, but also our resolve in fulfilling each and every resolution that we have adopted here at the Assembly.

Indeed, it would be elementary at this juncture to answer the question: to what extent have we fulfilled and satisfied the numerous resolutions that we have adopted over the decades? Indeed, what happens to the speeches after speeches that leaders have made? Lest we be blamed as a mere resolution-producing body, let us begin to act in concert to deliver the goods that we all should have delivered for the sake of the very humanity that we are charged with safeguarding. Let us plan the work and subsequently work the plan.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Pak Kil Yon, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Pak Kil Yon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) (*spoke in Korean; English text provided by the delegation*): At the outset, on behalf of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. I also wish to express confidence that, under your able stewardship, the current session will be a success.

It is a centuries-long aspiration of mankind to live in a peaceful and prosperous world, free from war and domination. Nearly 10 years have passed since the General Assembly adopted the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2), reflecting that common desire. Nevertheless, a vicious circle of aggression and intervention, conflict and terrorism still persists within international relations, and, consequently, global peace and security continue to face serious new challenges.

The military alliances in place throughout the cold war era are being further intensified, and arms races in new forms are taking place in the Asia-Pacific, European and other regions. Attempts to justify violations of the sovereignty of developing countries under the pretext of human rights, non-proliferation and the war on terror go ever-more undisguised. Disparities in wealth and imbalances in the level of

development between the North and the South have become further deepened, foreshadowing gloomy prospects for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in developing countries. The ever-worsening energy, food and financial crises of recent days are seriously affecting the already vulnerable economies of developing countries.

Today's realities require all Member States to pool their efforts for the building of a just, peaceful and prosperous world as a matter of priority, as they pledged in the Millennium Declaration.

The building of a new world, free and peaceful, without domination, subjugation, aggression or war is a common aspiration of the world's peoples and is now the shared responsibility of humankind. Ongoing efforts to reform the United Nations and enhance its role should be directed towards that end. It is also imperative to hold in check the attempts of some individual countries to address critical international issues related to world peace and security solely with a view to their own interests. For that purpose, there is a need to decisively enhance the authority of the General Assembly, in which all Member States exercise their equal rights.

Aggression and interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States and acts committed under the cover of human rights protection should be completely rejected. Today, the worst peace-breaker and human rights violator in the world is none other than the United States, as evidenced by its armed invasion of sovereign countries and its unhesitating massacre of innocent civilians.

Human rights are sovereign and independent rights. We urge Member States to remain vigilant in the face of the constant clamouring by the United States and other Western countries on the subject of human rights protection and not to accept the politicization of, or selectivity and double standards in human rights.

The main reason that the question of relations between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Japan has been unresolved for over half a century lies in Japan's failure to liquidate its past, which is stained with large-scale crimes. Japan is the only war criminal State that whitewashes the history of aggression and massacre of millions of innocent people in Korea and other Asian countries and today attempts to grab the sacred Tok Islet of Korea. Such a country

should never be permitted to become a permanent member of the Security Council.

No one aspires to peace more than the Korean people, who suffered under Japanese military occupation for almost half a century and since have been in confrontation with the United States for over 60 years. Even now, a series of reckless military manoeuvres destabilizing the region, including through the strengthening of strategic military alliances, massive shipments of state-of-the-art war equipment and annual large-scale military exercises, are being conducted in and around the Korean peninsula.

The Ulji Freedom Guardian joint military exercise, staged by the United States and the Republic of Korea this past August, under the pretext of what they called "Preparation for an emergency on the Korean peninsula", was nothing more than a war drill, for all intents and purposes mounting a pre-emptive nuclear strike on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Double-faced approaches, such as talking about dialogue and resorting to war exercises against a dialogue partner behind the scenes, are a clear indication of the persistently hostile policy of the United States against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the confrontational policy of the present South Korean regime.

In the face of such military threats and danger of war, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has been strengthening in every possible way its self-defence capability in order to safeguard its national sovereignty and peace. That choice and right of ours is just and legitimate and cannot be subject to criticism and blame by others. If the powerful deterrent to war secured by the Songun policy of the respected General Kim Jong Il had not existed, the Korean peninsula would have already suffered catastrophes several times over, which would certainly have led to the complete disruption of regional peace and stability as a whole.

The denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is the lifetime instruction of President Kim Il Sung, the great leader of our people, and the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remains consistent in its position of resolving the nuclear issue peacefully through dialogue and negotiations. The adoption of the North-South Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in 1992 and of the Agreed Framework between the United States of

America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 1994 are a demonstration of the firm political will of our Government to denuclearize the Korean peninsula.

Thanks to our sincere endeavours, several rounds of the Six-Party Talks have been held to date, enabling the adoption of the Joint Statement of 19 September 2005, followed by the agreements on and implementation of phased actions aimed at resolving the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea honoured its commitments to the agreements of the Six-Party Talks in good faith. Nuclear facilities were disabled at the final stage, a nuclear declaration was submitted and those measures envisaged for the destruction phase were even implemented in advance.

That notwithstanding, the United States has laid an artificial obstacle to implementing the 3 October agreement by refusing to implement its obligations and put forward such an unjust demand as verification of an international standard never agreed on among the six parties or between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States.

The international standard asserted by the United States is nothing but the special inspection that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) called for in the 1990s to infringe upon the sovereignty of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, causing it ultimately to pull out of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The United States has now put on hold the implementation of the procedure for de-listing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as a State sponsor of terrorism under the pretext of verification, even after having officially declared that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is not a State sponsor of terrorism. That is little short of admitting that the list is not actually related to terrorism.

As far as verification is concerned, it is a commitment to be fulfilled by the six parties during the final phase of the denuclearization of the entire Korean peninsula, in accordance with the 19 September Joint Statement. The United States insistence on unilateral inspection of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a brigand-like demand to unilaterally disarm the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the other warring party, by discarding its commitment to the

denuclearization of the entire Korean peninsula, the core of which is the removal of the United States nuclear threat, in accordance with the 19 September Joint Statement.

Now that the United States has broken the agreement, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is inevitably taking relevant countermeasures based on the principle of action for action. If the six parties are not true to their word in carrying out their respective obligations because of their great lack of trust in one another, no progress will be made at all. That is a lesson drawn from the process of previous Six-Party Talks. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will continue to make every sincere effort to achieve the denuclearization of the entire Korean peninsula, but we will not be indifferent to an attempt to offend our dignity and self-respect and to violate our sovereignty.

As members are well aware, inter-Korean relations have been worsening ever since the installation of the new regime in South Korea, which rejects the North-South joint declaration of 15 June 2000 and the declaration of 4 October 2007. Resolutions were adopted by consensus at previous General Assembly sessions supporting the historic North-South summits held in Pyongyang in 2000 and 2007 and the 15 June 2000 joint declaration and the 4 October 2007 declaration resulting from them. As stipulated in those resolutions, the 15 June joint declaration and programme of action and the 4 October declaration constitute major milestones that could shorten the process of improving inter-Korean relations and achieving independent national reunification in the new century, as well as a grand programme for Korean reunification that clearly reflects the demands of the times and the aspirations of the nation.

Those declarations enjoy the unanimous support not only of the entire Korean people, but also of the international community as a whole, as they are most comprehensive and realistic in their content and include all previous inter-Korean agreements, including the joint statement of 4 July 1972, which clarifies the three principles of independence, peaceful reunification and great national unity.

It is intolerable that the declarations agreed upon and adopted at the highest level in the North and the South and supported unanimously by the international community are now being disregarded simply because of the changed regime in South Korea. The

Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will continue to seek national reconciliation and unity by fully implementing the 15 June joint declaration and the 4 October declaration, launching a new era of independent reunification, peace and prosperity and doing its utmost to ensure durable peace and stability on the Korean peninsula.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to 5 minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Salsabili (Islamic Republic of Iran): This morning, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates raised some unacceptable, futile and unfounded claims about the three Iranian islands located in the Persian Gulf, namely, Abu Musa and the two Tunbs. The Islamic Republic of Iran categorically rejects those claims and wishes to emphasize that those three islands are eternal parts of the Iranian territory and consequently are under Iranian sovereignty.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, while stressing its determination to have good and brotherly relations with its neighbour the United Arab Emirates, reiterates that all actions and measures on the Iranian island of Abu Musa have been taken in exercise of the sovereign rights of the Islamic Republic of Iran and in accordance with the arrangements emanating from the documents exchanged in 1971. The Islamic Republic of Iran stands ready to continue its bilateral talks with the relevant officials of the United Arab Emirates with a view to removing any misunderstanding that may exist in that regard.

Mr. Okuda (Japan): My delegation would like to exercise its right of reply in response to the statement made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. That statement is entirely groundless, and we cannot accept it.

Japan has been facing up to its past with sincerity and consistency. Japan has officially expressed a sense of remorse and apology many times since the end of the Second World War. With that in mind, Japan has, for more than 60 years, consistently dedicated itself to promoting international peace and prosperity and demonstrated its respect for democracy and human

rights. Japan has adhered consistently and exclusively to a defensive security policy based on the principle that it should never become a military Power, and we have adhered to the position that international problems have to be resolved not militarily, but always peacefully.

It must be noted that Japan has sincerely addressed this issue in the past and continues to do so. It must also be noted that Japan has served as a non-permanent member of the Security Council nine times since it joined the United Nations, some 50 years ago. We are of the view that Japan has been making positive contributions to international peace and security by discharging our responsibility as a member of the Security Council.

With regard to Japan's position on Security Council reform, as we have publicly stated many times at the United Nations and in other forums, and as is well known, Japan stands ready to contribute actively and constructively to international peace and security at any time.

The fundamental policy of Japan remains unchanged. On the basis of the Pyongyang Declaration, Japan will normalize its relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea through the settlement of the unfortunate past and the comprehensive resolution of outstanding problems, including abductions and nuclear and missile issues.

Mr. Al-Barout (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I apologize for taking the floor at this late hour. I would like to reply to what the representative of Iran just said. Those false claims regarding Iran's sovereignty over the three islands, Abu Musa, greater Tunb and lesser Tunb are unjust and illegal. My delegation has always held an unswerving principled position on those islands and reiterates its great disappointment at what the representative of Iran has just repeated, as his delegation does every year.

The representative of Iran cannot falsify all the demographic, political and historical truths, which show that those islands belong to the Emirates. We have never relinquished and will never relinquish our legal, historical and political right to those islands, which are an integral part of our sovereign territory and our exclusive economic zone. We repeat that that territory along with its continental shelf and airspace, is ours and cannot be divided. We categorically repudiate all the false claims and illegal measures

undertaken by Iran concerning those islands. We base our position on the United Nations Charter and international law.

We repeat our appeal to the international community to urge Iran to show its peaceful good intentions in the region by entering into unconditional bilateral negotiations between our two countries regarding the occupation of the islands, or by taking the matter to the International Court of Justice to bring about a solution, as is the practice in other cases.

We reiterate that stability and economic progress in the Arabian Gulf require good-neighbourly relations in line with the principles of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and non-interference in their internal affairs.

Mr. Pak Tok Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation would like me to reply to the remarks made a moment ago by the delegation of Japan. The Japanese representative's remarks attempt to divorce black from white, as if Japan were doing something to redress its past crimes.

In adopting the Pyongyang Declaration of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Japan in September 2002, both Governments agreed to redress Japan's past crimes against the Korean people during the Japanese occupation of Korea, the issue of missing Japanese and other pending matters. As part of its efforts to implement the Declaration, the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea dealt with solving that issue sincerely and with great generosity. In keeping with the Pyongyang Declaration, upon the request of the Japanese Government we made investigations into the missing persons of Japan, and we informed the Japanese Government that, of the 13 Japanese war abductees, we sent the five surviving abductees and all their children to Japan after informing the Japanese Government.

Recently, in the last month, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Japan agreed to undertake another investigation into that issue. So far, we have done everything we can, and we will do our best to solve the issue.

However, Japan has not shown any tangible willingness whatsoever to fulfil its responsibility properly to redress its past crime. Japan has refused to honestly admit to and repent of the heinous crimes it committed against humanity during the illegal military

occupation of Korea in the past and has persistently evaded responsibility for those crimes, although the old century has been replaced by a new one.

In his remarks a few minutes ago, the Japanese representative said that Japan repented sincerely, but in fact we are very concerned about the irresponsible remarks distorting the historical facts — the crimes committed by Japan. Very often, high officials of the Japanese Government distort the real facts. For example, on 4 March 2007, the then Japanese Prime Minister refused to admit Japan's responsibility for the issue of comfort women by making reckless remarks, such as that there was no evidence proving the forcible recruitment of comfort women for the imperial Japanese army. It is a historical fact that Japan forced 200,000 young Korean women into sexual slavery for its imperial army. Is there any such army in the world in the history of war that took girls and young women as their sexual slaves? It is only Japan.

On 25 March 2007, Japan's Deputy Cabinet Minister asserted that there were nurses or journalists for the Japanese army, but no comfort women, and that there were prostitutes who were sold by parents. Such irresponsible remarks come out very often. I do not want to talk any further about the crimes committed by Japan.

He mentioned the few Japanese abducted — a few more than 10 Japanese. But that is the tip of the iceberg compared to the great crime against humanity committed by Japan in the past, including the massacre of 1 million Korean people, forced labour of 8.4 million Koreans and sexual slavery of 200,000 Korean women for the Japanese army. But Japan has been evading its responsibility for the crime for more than 60 years.

For Japan to honestly settle its criminal past would be to win the trust of all the people and become a member of the international community with a clear conscience. Japan had better discard its wrong way of thinking and its stance and make a political decision to redeem its past, though belatedly.

Mr. Okuda (Japan): My delegation will again have to exercise its right of reply in response to the statement made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea held working level consultations in June and

August 2008. At those consultations, the two sides agreed on what the aim and concrete modality of a comprehensive investigation on the abduction issue to be conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. However, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea later notified Japan that it would not conduct the investigation until it could ascertain the position of the new Administration of Japan on the agreement reached at the working consultations. Japan strongly hopes that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will establish an investigation committee with the necessary authority and that it will commence the investigation soon.

Regarding the Japanese past, as I said earlier, Japan has been facing up to its past with sincerity and consistency. However, the numbers that the delegation of Democratic People's Republic of Korea cites as those killed and murdered are totally groundless. It is simply not possible to justify ongoing violations of human rights with such a groundless allegation.

About the comfort women, we have to say that, on that issue, the Government of Japan continues to adhere to the position expressed by Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono in his statement of 4 August 1993, in which the Government of Japan extended its "Sincere apologies and remorse".

Again, it must be noted that Japan has been seriously addressing the issue of its past history.

Mr. Pak Tok Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I am sorry to take the floor again. The Japanese representative has just said that the figures I gave were groundless. But Japan refuses to reveal all the facts and figures it holds in its archives. We requested, on numerous occasions, that Japan reveal all those documents. Since he said that the figure I gave is groundless, I will give the exact numbers we have got so far: 7,784,839 Koreans were drafted for forced labour without knowing their destination, and 200,000 Korean teenagers, girls and women were forced to serve the Imperial Japanese Army as comfort women.

Well, it took half a century for Japan to admit its crime in Korea. No one knows how long it will take for Japan to liquidate the crime. My delegation would like to urge Japan and to remind Japan that without thorough elimination of the past crime, a clear future for Japan cannot be expected. Whatever pretext Japan puts forward to justify its crime, the fact remains that Japan illegally drafted millions of Korean people to

forced labour as well as sexual slavery. But it still refuses to redress those crimes of the past.

The President in the Chair.

Programme of work

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document

A/INF/63/4, which contains the programme of work of the Assembly and the schedule of plenary meetings for the period from October to December 2008. I wish also to inform members that the lists of speakers for the items listed in document A/INF/63/4 are open.

The meeting rose at 7.35 p.m.